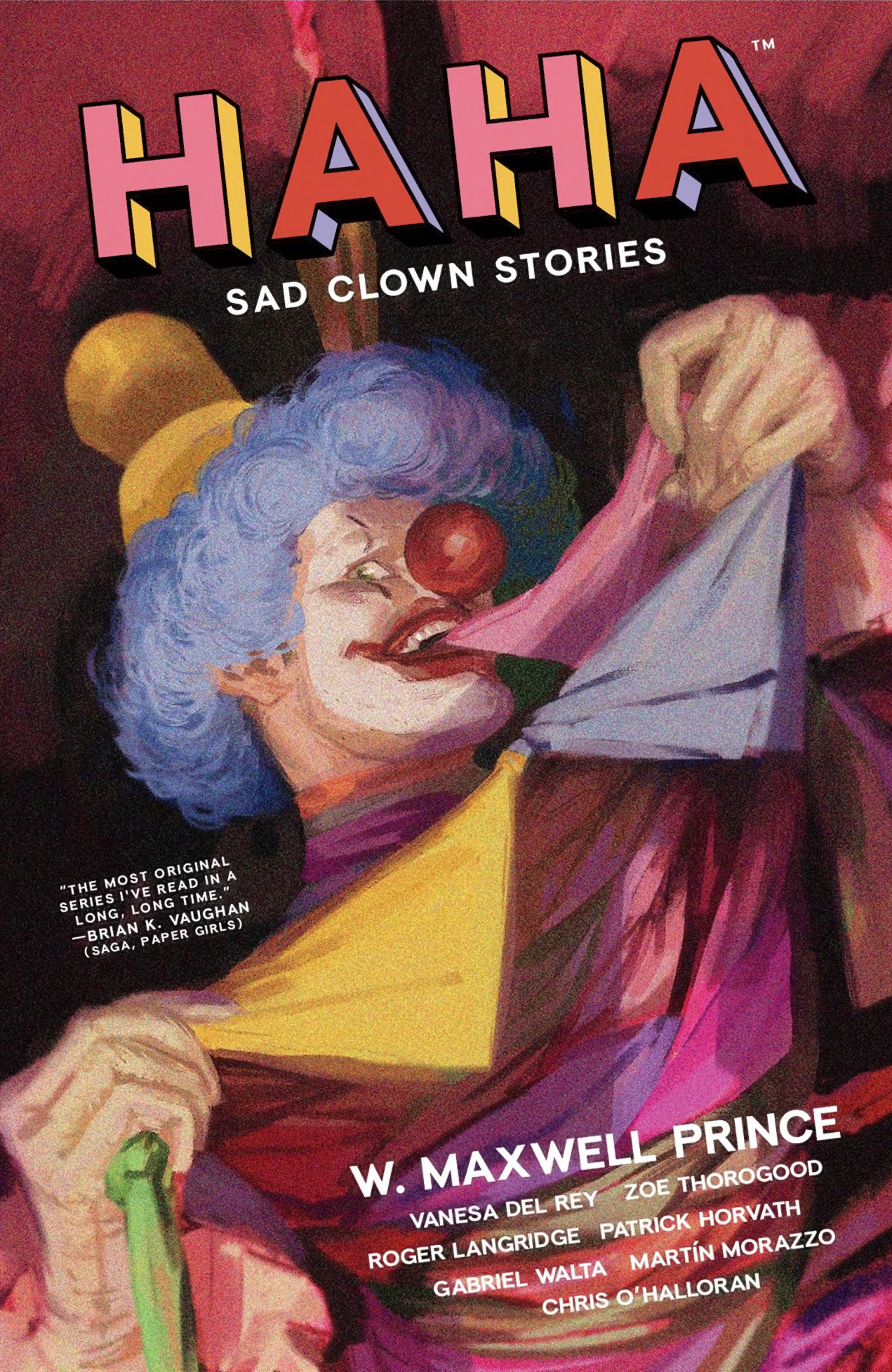
HAHA™
SAD CLOWN STORIES
"THE MOST ORIGINAL SERIES I'VE READ IN A LONG, LONG TIME."
—BRIAN K. VAUGHAN
(SAGA, PAPER GIRLS)
W. MAXWELL PRINCE
VANESA DEL REY
ZOE THOROGOOD
ROGER LANGRIDGE
PATRICK HORVATH
GABRIEL WALTA
MARTÍN MORAZZO
CHRIS O'HALLORAN

ADMIT ONE

HAHA

SAD CLOWN STORIES

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SAD CLOWN STORIES

WRITER

W. MAXWELL PRINCE

ARTISTS

VANESA DEL REY

ZOE THOROGOOD

ROGER LANGRIDGE

PATRICK HORVATH

GABRIEL HERNÁNDEZ WALTA

MARTÍN MORAZZO

CHRIS O'HALLORAN

LETTERER

GOOD OLD NEON

TRADE COVER ART

VANESA DEL REY

TRADE PAPERBACK DESIGN

SASHA E HEAD

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HAPPY HANK
THE VERY HAPPY CLOWN

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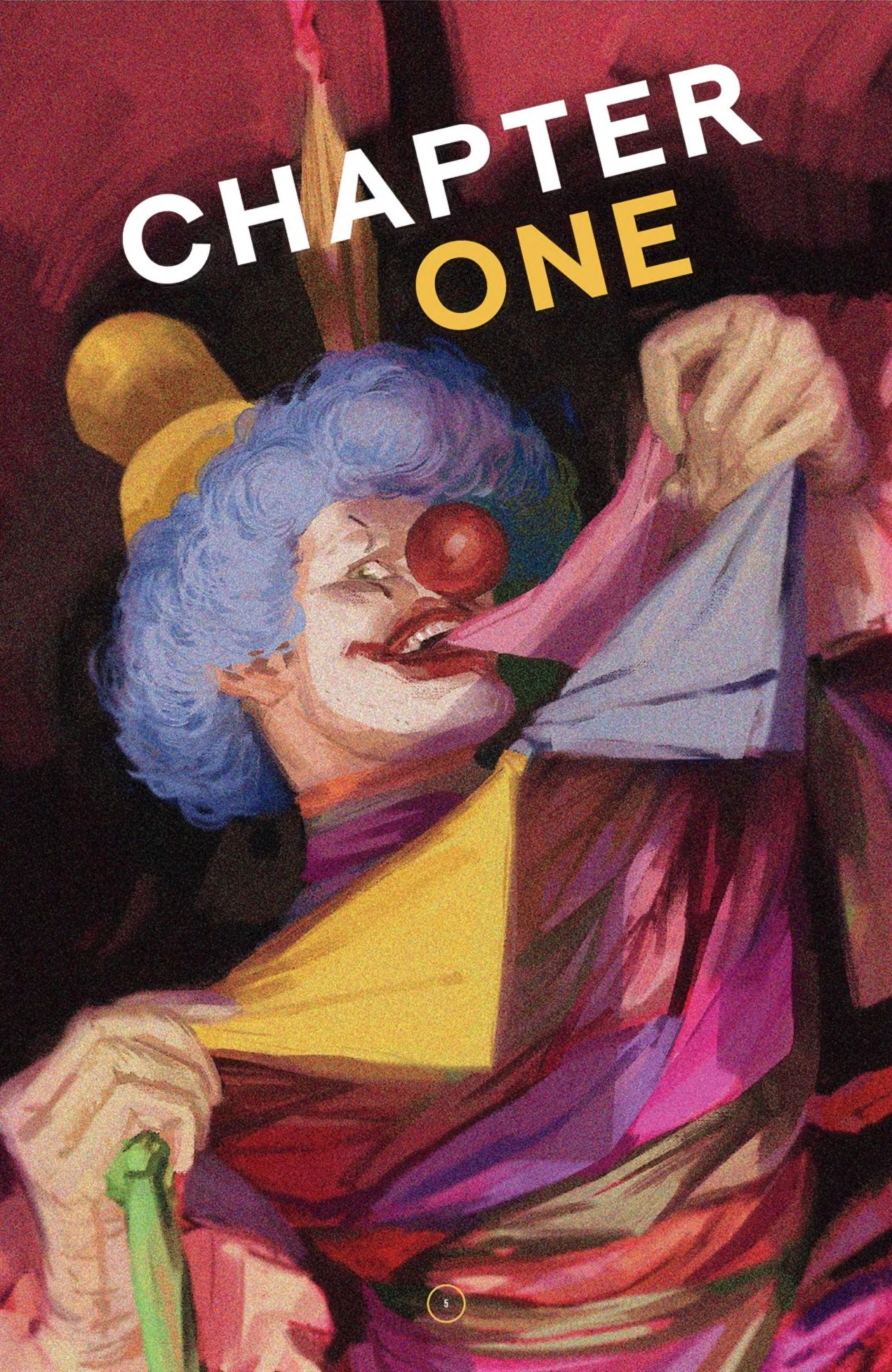
"WHAT A SAD BUSINESS, BEING FUNNY."

—CHARLIE CHAPLIN
LIMELIGHT

FOR JUNIPER

—WMP


CHAPTER
ONE

CHAPTER 1

BARTELBY REJECTS THE PREMISE

ART
VANESA DEL REY

COLORS
CHRIS O'HALLORAN

I'm the luckiest guy there ever was.
Do you have to wear it at the table?

I've got a house. A wife. Kids.
You're scaring the children, Bart.
Even a little doggy.
wwhh
It's my work uniform, Brenda. I'm on my way to work.
And please...
When the face is on, it's Bartelby.
"Work."
You're a goddamn clown at a rinkydink amusement park that's about to shutter the windows for good.
Your job is a joke.
My life is terrific.

Funville isn't closing down!
Donny's talking to new investors...
HONK HONK
You hear that, Johnny? Your daddy's a comedian now, too.
Really, I'm not kidding! I'm blessed beyond belief...
Gimme that!
What did I tell you about gags? What did I say about funny accessories?
Laugh all you want, but this joke keeps the lights on.
Compared to other clowns, I've got it made in the shade. Easy peasy.
ka-click!
Goddammit.
There but for the grace of God go I, right?

FUNVILLE

ARCADE

ICE CREAM

POP

LAYOUTS BY JOHN RR

PENCILS & INK BY VANESA DEL REX

I'm sorry to say **Funville** is closing down.

Investors won't touch us with a ten-foot pole.

People just get their ***amusement*** elsewhere nowadays.

Donny, *please*. My family...

Listen, B. You're a good clown. Real good.

That little act you do with the...what's it called?

...endless handkerchief.

Endless handkerchief.

That one's a God honest *side-slapper*.

But you gotta face the ***facts***, kiddo...

What was funny a few years ago ain't so funny anymore.
Brenda's gonna kill me...
She'll take the kids.
I'll die alone.
Aw, come on, B. She'll understand.
Here...
Your last check.
I added some overtime to soften the blow.
Thanks, Donny.
But I'd hide that in my sock if I was you...
People are real desperate out there.
Don't trust nobody.

I mean, sure...
Things get pretty rough sometimes.
Life can be rotten for the little guy trying to make his way!
But my feeling is:
It could always be worse; I don't really have it so bad.
You get the pink slip, too?
Hi, Phil.
Ol' Tommy Hobbes was right:
Life is "nasty, brutish, and short."
...let me walk you to your car, B.
It can always get a little worse...

The internet, virtual reality. All that stuff.
Why have real fun when you can plug in at home and get it for free?
Absolutely. Totally.
I hate to sound like a dinosaur...
But folks these days don't--
KRAK
I'm awful sorry, B.
wuhhh
Phil, are you...mugging me?!

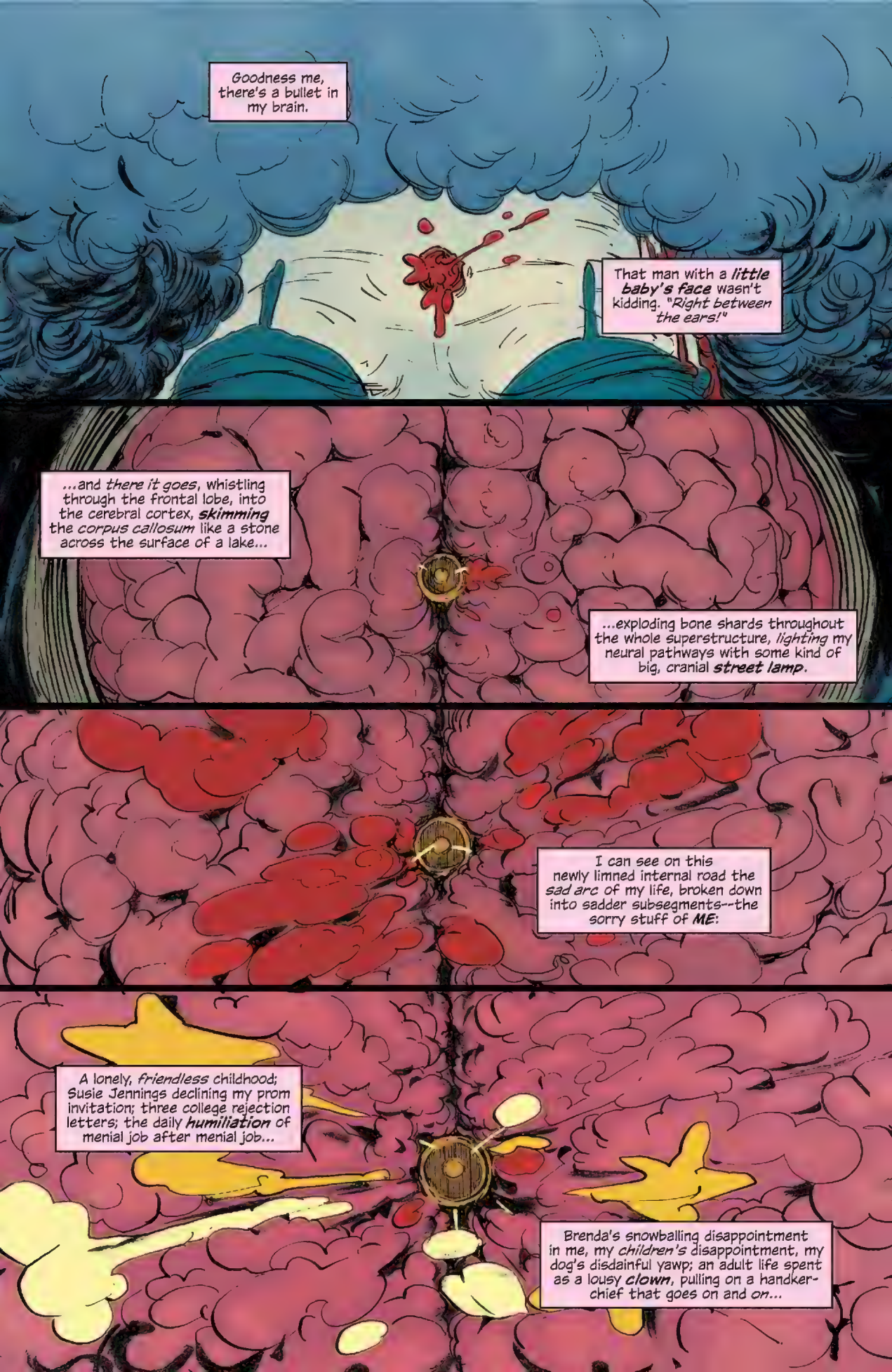
I thought we were *friends*!
You're my ***best*** friend, B. But what else am I supposed to do?
Do you know how ***expensive*** Ginny's ballet classes are? The *shoes* alone...
...I'm gonna need you to give me your wallet now.
Okay...
"Nasty, brutish, and short."
Some guys just hit the nail on the head, don't they?
Good luck, Bartelby.
Luck. Ha-ha. ***Hahaha haha!***
Sometimes you just gotta ***laugh***.
...because otherwise you might cry.

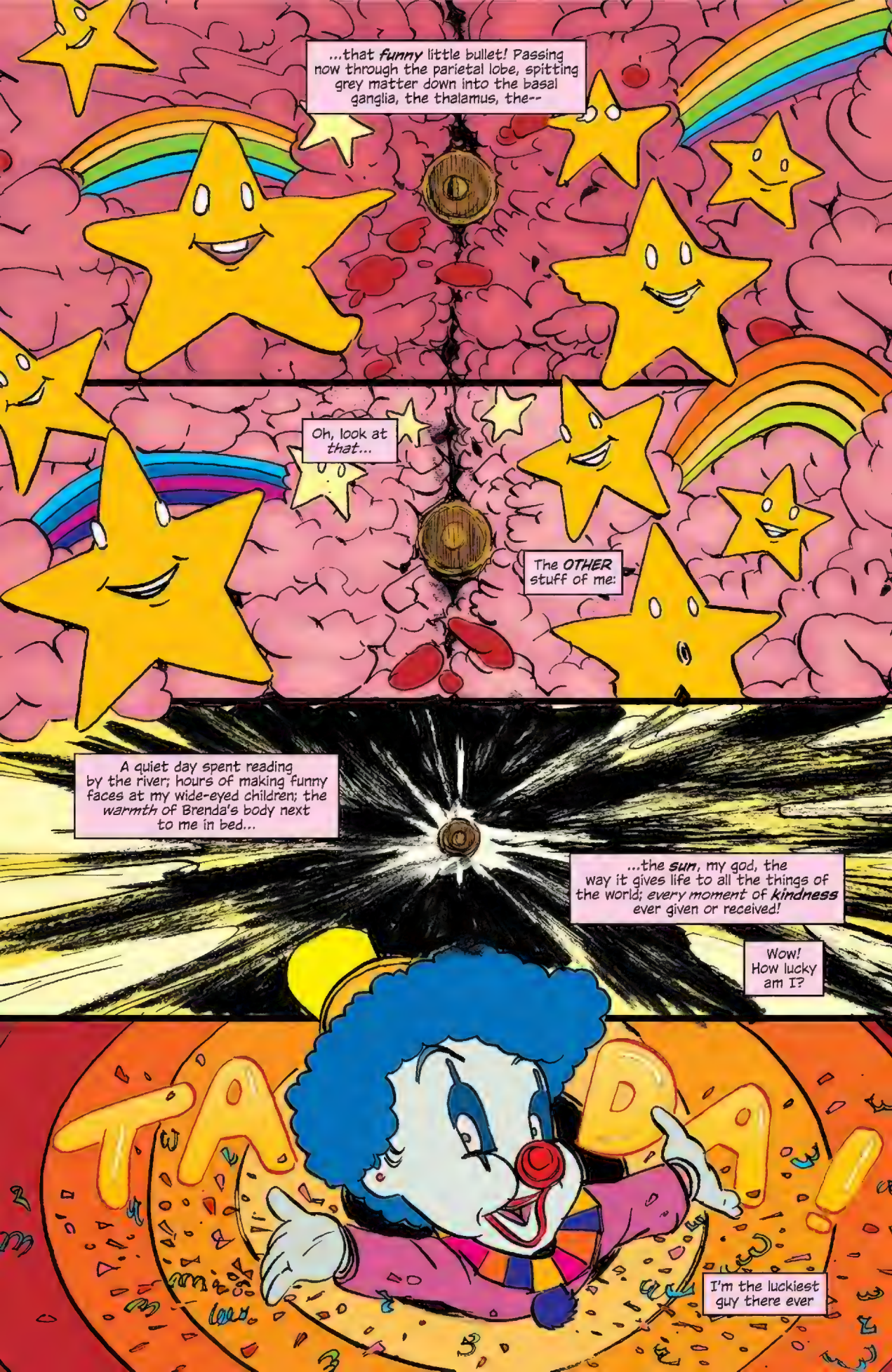
This check'll only hold us over until the end of the month.
...that's if Brenda doesn't leave me first.
BANK
What I need is a *plan*.
Maybe I could do birthday parties? Or *corporate retreats* and such.
Cootchie-coo.
"Bar Mitzvahs with Bartelby!" has a kind of pleasing alliteration to it.
Or! I could go to night school and finally finish my degree.
Get a desk job with some real, true-blue ***benefits***. Health, dental, a 401k--the friggin' *works*.
For a guy like me, the sky's the limit!
...you just gotta *recalibrate* your view a little to see the **truth**:
Everybody down on the ground!
Grace is like a long rainbow handkerchief...

...it never ends.
Wah wah.
Baby wants a bottle!
It'd be so easy to throw in the towel--to lash out at a cruel world defined by its cruelty.
But, the thing is...
Heroics will be rewarded with a bullet in the brain.
You've been duly warned.
I'd prefer not to.

This clown ain't following directions.
KRACK
Down, Bozo.
Do as you're told or I swear you'll get one right between the ears.
hehe heh....ahah haha HAHAHAHA
What's so goddamn funny?
You just heh heh gotta laugh sometimes...
Knock it off. NOW.

I'd prefer not to.
I'm serious, motherfucker. Shut up and do what you're supposed to.
I'd prefer not to.
S-stop it, man. Don't make me hurt you.
There but for the grace of G--
SHUT UP!!
POP


Goodness me, there's a bullet in my brain.
That man with a *little baby's face* wasn't kidding. "*Right between the ears!*"
...and *there it goes*, whistling through the frontal lobe, into the cerebral cortex, ***skimming*** the *corpus callosum* like a stone across the surface of a lake...
...exploding bone shards throughout the whole superstructure, *lighting* my neural pathways with some kind of big, cranial ***street lamp***.
I can see on this newly limned internal road the *sad arc* of my life, broken down into sadder subsegments--the sorry stuff of ***ME***:
A lonely, *friendless* childhood; Susie Jennings declining my prom invitation; three college rejection letters; the daily ***humiliation*** of menial job after menial job...
Brenda's snowballing disappointment in me, my *children's* disappointment, my dog's disdainful yawp; an adult life spent as a lousy ***clown***, pulling on a handkerchief that goes on and *on*...


...that *funny* little bullet! Passing now through the parietal lobe, spitting grey matter down into the basal ganglia, the thalamus, the--
Oh, look at *that*...
The *OTHER* stuff of me:
A quiet day spent reading by the river; hours of making funny faces at my wide-eyed children; the *warmth* of Brenda's body next to me in bed...
...the *sun*, my god, the way it gives life to all the things of the world; *every moment* of *kindness* ever given or received!
Wow! How lucky am I?
TADA!
I'm the luckiest guy there ever

Shit! Shit, man. You...killed him.
We weren't supposed to kill anybody!
...I guess I did.
It was so easy...
Now they know we're serious...
Anyone else feel like making jokes?
Anyone else think they're really funny?
Y-you guys w-wanna see a trick?

It's a real side-splitter.
What a day!
POW
Lost my job.
BANG!
Mugged by my best buddy.
Shot in the head!
hehe
Let him go, man. I'll shoot you again if I have to!
You'll die in a clown outfit, for crissakes!
Well...

It could always be worse!
Nnnggg!
CLICK CLICK CLICK
Tada!
MUAH
I didn't want any of this...
But I need money. I got a family.
A wife, kids. And a dog...
Hey...
Me too.
"It's just one of those things..."

The bullet went *clean through.*
I don't know ***how***, but you're totally fine.
BANK
You might just be the ***luckiest*** guy that ever lived.
I've always thought so.
No criminal history for our trio of assailants--all three are *first-timers.*
Me? I blame it on the ***economy***. And the news, too...
All that *shit* that drives decent people crazy.
You okay, man? You need anything?
If it's alright with you...
I'd like to go home now.

Blame the news, the economy.
Virtual reality, the internet, the *weather*. It doesn't matter.
Decent people are driven by any *number* of things to act indecently.
It'd be so ***easy*** to lose your head...
...to give in to the idea that *life* is brief and ***terrible***.
And hey--
Maybe it *is*.

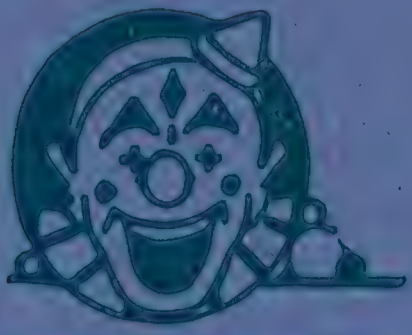
But I'm making the choice--every single day, all the time--to *adjust* my view and see it different.
The stuff of me is full of small, wonderful things.
So even in the face of a strained marriage...
I'm blessed, full stop. There's no two ways about it.

...of an empty checking account...
...of an embarrassing job now gone to the wind...
Hello, family of mine!
You look like balloons!
Bart? My God, what happened to you?
I got shot in the head by a big baby!
HAHAHAHA
I laugh.
Jesus, B. Come inside before the neighbors see you like this.
Hi, Daddy!
Sometimes you just gotta laugh.

I swear, I could die of embarrass-ment.
COME
Because otherwise...

CHAPTER
TWO
Rudy

CHAPTER 2



RUDOLPH

ON THE ROAD TO FUNVILLE

ART
ZOE THOROGOOD

COLORS
CHRIS O'HALLORAN

NOW
There's all types of folks. I can tell you that much.
Give it up one more time for Fiona and her forty-inch fingernails!
TONIGHT:

And you don't gotta look too far to lay eyes on a *new* kind you ain't never seen before.
In fact, there's very likely an *unimaginable variety of person* just down the road from where you're sitting right now.
Cheers, fellas.
...or maybe it's *you* who's the unimaginable variety, and *you're* down the road from some poor sap who don't realize it.
Scratch my back, Fiona!
...scratch my *front*!
Your salary wouldn't cover it, hon.

They're all yours, Rudy.
Me? I'm right *here*...
...thin wallets and all.
...ready to dance for a bunch of tightwads, my head screwed up something worse than I can explain.
Where's your *light?*
The other reindeer won't be able to see through the fog.
And I guess I been thinking lately about how that happened.
Dasher and Dancer and Prancer and Vixen...

BACK THEN
The doctors said my momma was crazy, and my daddy didn't argue with that diagnosis.
I'm not sure what I'm supposed to do, Bob.
She's off her meds, doing god-knows-what to make money.
...dressing like a goddamn clown.
A clown? Like a clown-clown?
I was twelve years old and I loved my momma no matter what cruel words the world cared to call her.
Full Bozo. Makeup and all.
Jesus.
How's Rudolph handling it?
I don't know...

...how do you tell a kid that their mom is batty as a fucking loon?
I loved her then like I love her now and I don't think anything will ever change that fact for one second or a minute or a day.
Every little girl and boy needs a momma. That's just the god-honest truth of it.
Like a plant needs sunshine or like a doggy needs a bowl.
I needed my momma.
So I stuck with her...
...all the way to Funville.
Rudolph, the red-nosed reindeer...

Hiya, pumpkin.
Hi, Momma.
Did you bring it?
Bingo!
There.
Much better.
Now you're ready for the pilgrimage.

"Funville..."
What is it?
WELCOME TO FUNVILLE
A fresh start.
A place full of people just like us.
Misfits, oddballs.
Those that look in the mirror and accept their real, no-bullshit selves.
The police report--which I keep in a metal filing cabinet next to my bed--suggests that Momma was smack dab in the middle of "a severe psychotic break."
Your father could never understand...
He hasn't seen the angels up in the sky, flap-flap-flapping their colorful wings.
"An episode of emotional and physical distress resulting in various, often unrelated delusions and compulsions."
But they're there, Rudy.
You'll see.
"I don't understand what the problem is..."

We have the cash...
MOTEL
There's no problem, ma'am.
It's just the makeup...it strikes me as a little strange, is all.
I've seen things that would make your dick shrivel itself right back up into your stomach and hide for dear life.
You don't know the first thing about "strange."
Now give me my goddamn room key.
Let's go, Rudolph.
Lord almighty.
People got all sorts of words for what they don't understand.

"Feast your eyes upon Bartelby and his infinite handkerchief..."
Whatta ya think?
Am I a beautiful harlequin or *what*?
...but there's no **vocabulary** for some things.
Where are you going?
Gas money don't grow on trees, pumpkin.
But lucky for you and me, there's all *kinds* of folks...
And you'd be *amazed* what they're willing to pay for.
Now get some sleep.
We're back on the road come sun-up.
Some things are ***beyond*** language.

Dasher and Dancer and Prancer and Vixen...
Comet and Cupid and Donner and Blitzen...
But do you recall the most famous reindeer of all?
What happened to your face?
Occupational hazard.
... though the job is not without its perks.
So up and at 'em, partner...
Santa's sleigh awaits.

I was only twelve, but Momma *insisted* I drive the leg from El Paso to Phoenix.
"You gotta grow up sometime," she said.
We'll save a day if we cut straight through Nevada.
Momma, can we buy fireworks?
I wanna see a Roman candle make a flower in the sky.
Like a ***chrysan-themum.***
Rudy. We need every dollar we have 'til we get to Funville.
Just one more motel, then it's *straight through* to our brand new lives.
You gotta grow up sometime.

J.C. WILBER
Short Stay
Careful! Too much pressure and snkkkkt.
...the blood starts running and never stops.
Up... up...up!
Look at that. Baby's bottom.
If I've said it once I've said it a million times:
There's some things only a momma can do.
Hey, I been thinking...
How about we go make some flowers in the sky after all?

We found that fireworks stand a few miles down the highway and bought the two biggest Roman candles I'd ever seen.
And we *did it.*
Chrysanthemums of vivid color...
The angels.
WOW!
They're so beautiful.
One last bright light before everything got dark.

You didn't say nothing about--
SHHH! Just give me a minute, alright?
Just one minute is all.
It's so late.
Sorry to wake you, pumpkin.
Momma needs you to do something for her, okay?
One more favor before the end of the road.

Close your eyes.
Close your ears.
You stay in here until I say it's time to come out, understand?
I paid for thirty minutes.
Sorry, baby. I'm all yours.
Thirty minutes, five hundred dollars.
You get to have your way with the *bad little clown.*

I'm not kidding: there's more types of people than you could ever imagine.
Folks you might think peculiar.
Folks you might call batty as a fucking loon.
Yes. That's right.
But it's more complicated than that.
H-hands off my momma, bozo.
One slice and the blood won't stop running.
I'd explain it to you...
R-Rudolph. Go back to the bathr--
What the fuck kinda setup is this?
Get that thing out of my face, you little twerp.
Leave her alone, she's just--
But there ain't no words.

SMACK!
You thin-pricked piece of shit!
What the fu--
No one lays a *finger* on my daughter!
You hear me?!
NO ONE!
hguuh

Momma?
Fuck!!
Get your things.
We need to go.
NOW!
J.C. WILBER
Short Stay
What was the last thought that man thought before his air ran out?

I think about that a lot.
Though I'm not really sure why.
Once we get to Funville, we can start over.
A whole *park* full of people just like us.
They'll take care of us. The angels *said* so.
FUNVILLE AMUSEMENT PARK 2 MILES
Sometimes I think it's 'cause there's something *wrong* with me.
No...
Maybe so.

Could be there's something wrong with everyone.
UNVILLE
CLOSED
ARCADE
CLOSED
ALIEN KILLER

Nothing...
DONUTS
It's all gone.
All gone...
I'm sorry...

I'm so sorry, Rudolph.
They arrested Momma for killing that man.
...put her in a psychiatric hospital to await trial.
About two weeks before the court date, she was taking a shower and had an aneurysm.
"Hemorrhagic stroke," the report says. "A burst blood vessel."
It's okay, Momma.
CLOSED 4EVA
SAVE OUR PARKS
Like fireworks inside her skull.
It's okay.

It's a nice idea, ain't it? Starting over.
A brand new life in a brand new place.
Alright, fellas. Here comes our next curious coquette...
But here's the god-honest truth:
There is no such luxury.
Who you are-- the real you--it follows you around wherever you go.
She's a funny hunny who can light up the dark winter sky in a pinch...
You can try and hide it...
Showtime.
Here she comes now to yank your sleighs across the stars...

Rudolph, our red-nosed dear!
But it shines right through.

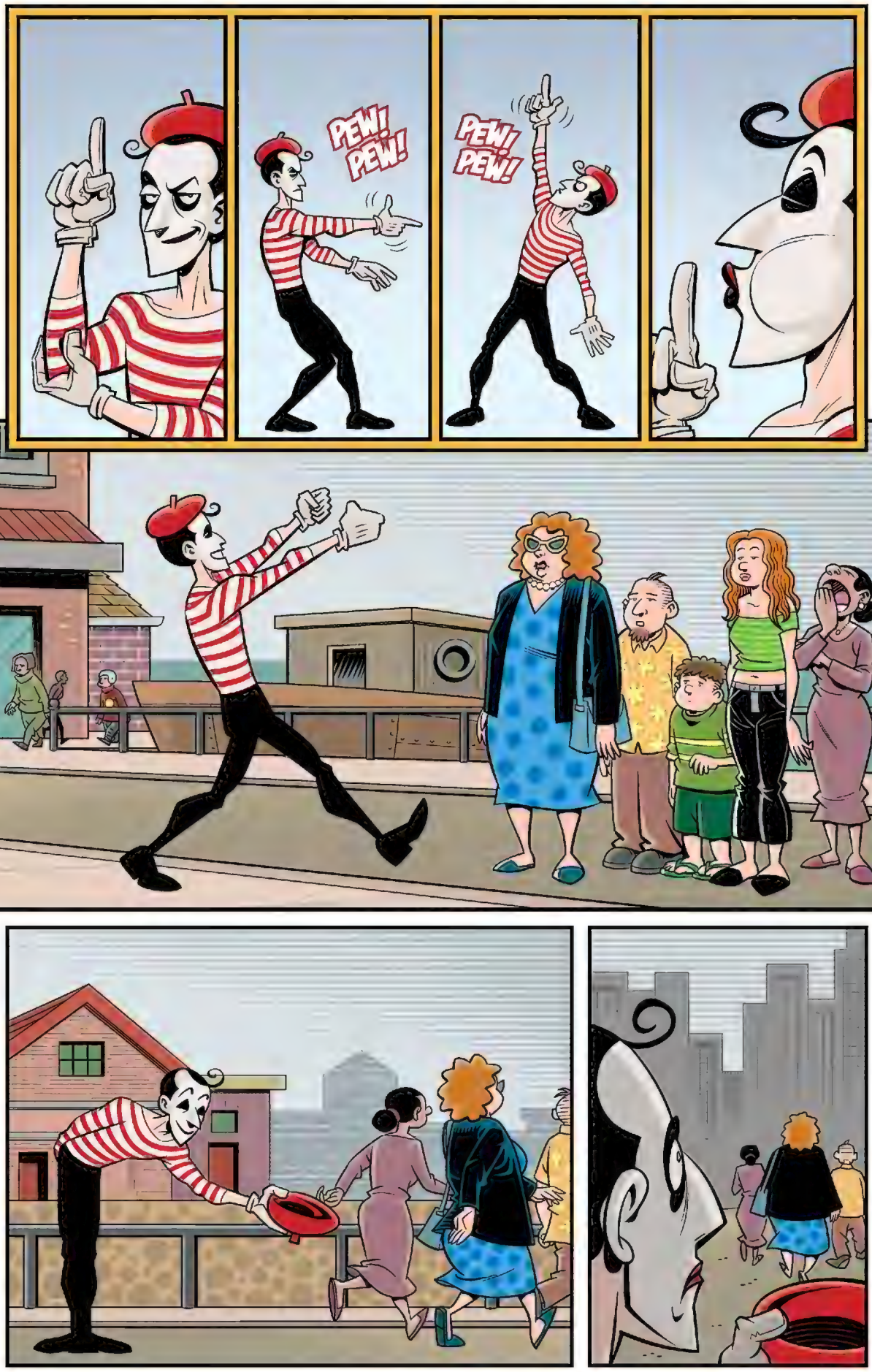
CHAPTER
THREE
REM

CHAPTER 3

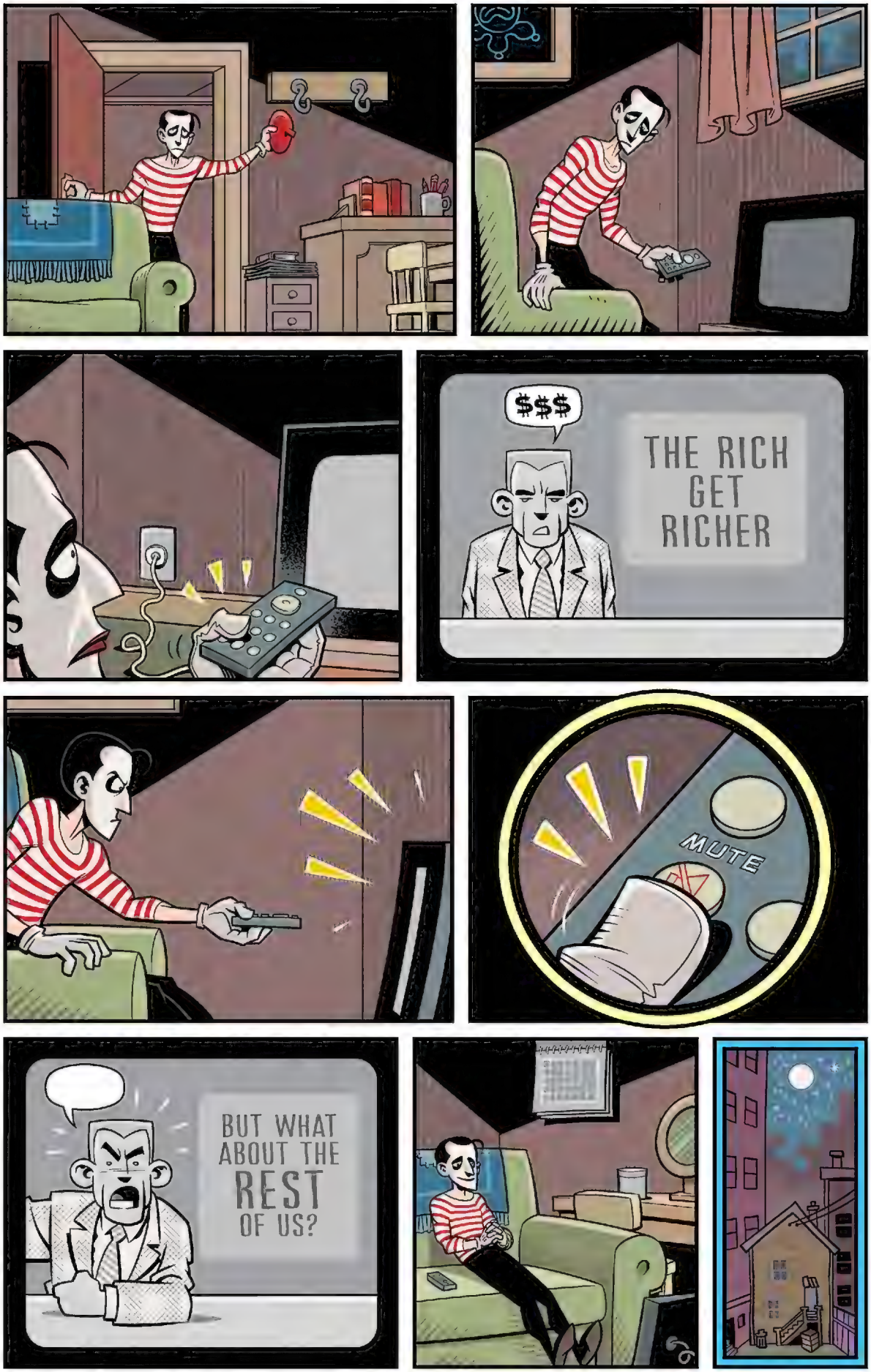
REMI SAYS...

ART
ROGER LANGRIDGE

J.C. WILBER
SOUTH S


PEW! PEW!
PEW! PEW!

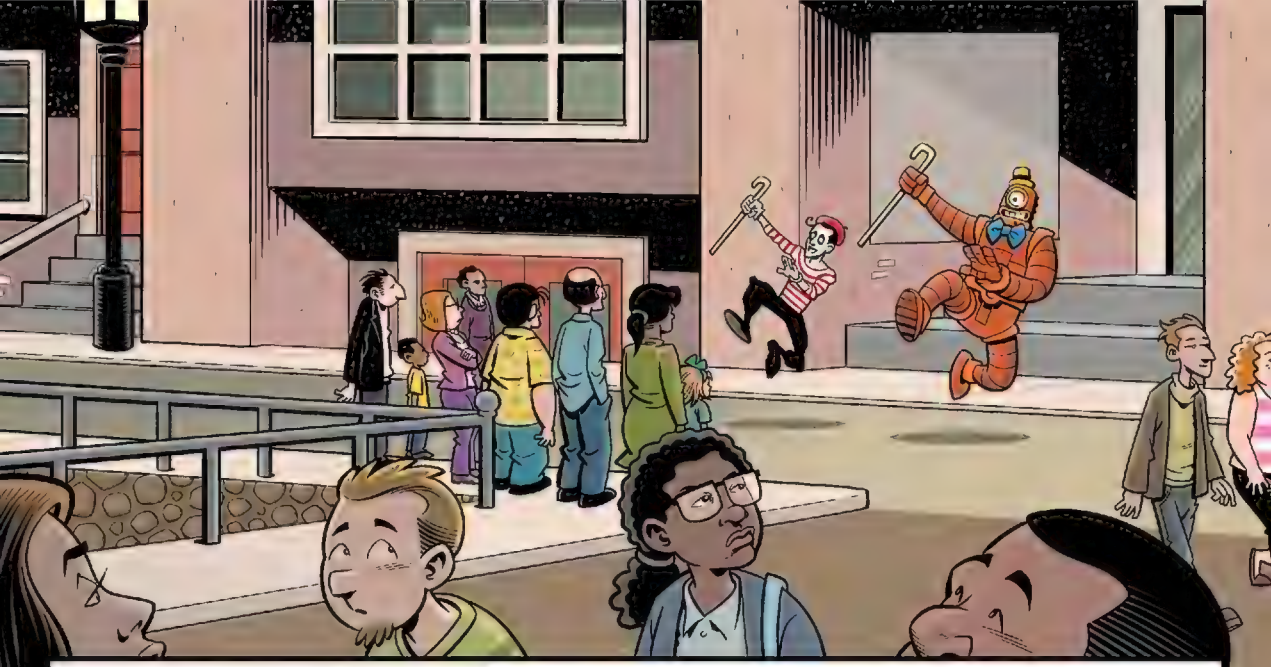
LANDLORD
!!
LANDLORD
$$$
$$$!
@#$!!

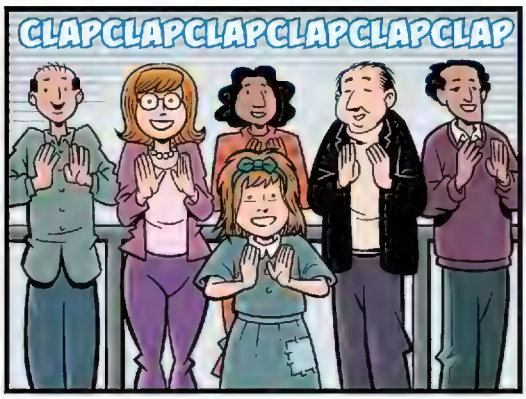

$$$
THE RICH GET RICHER
MUTE
BUT WHAT ABOUT THE REST OF US?

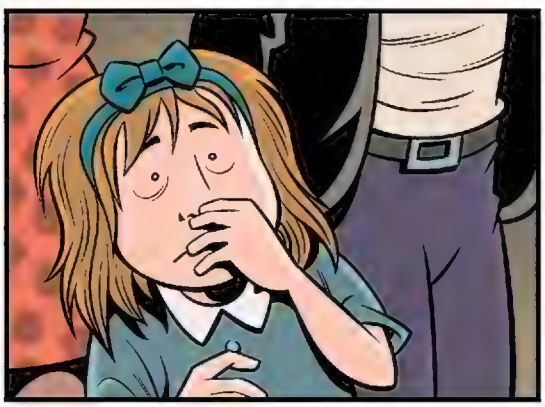
NEED $$$?
SIFT THE SCRAP HEAPS FOR COPPER WIRE
E-Z MONEY

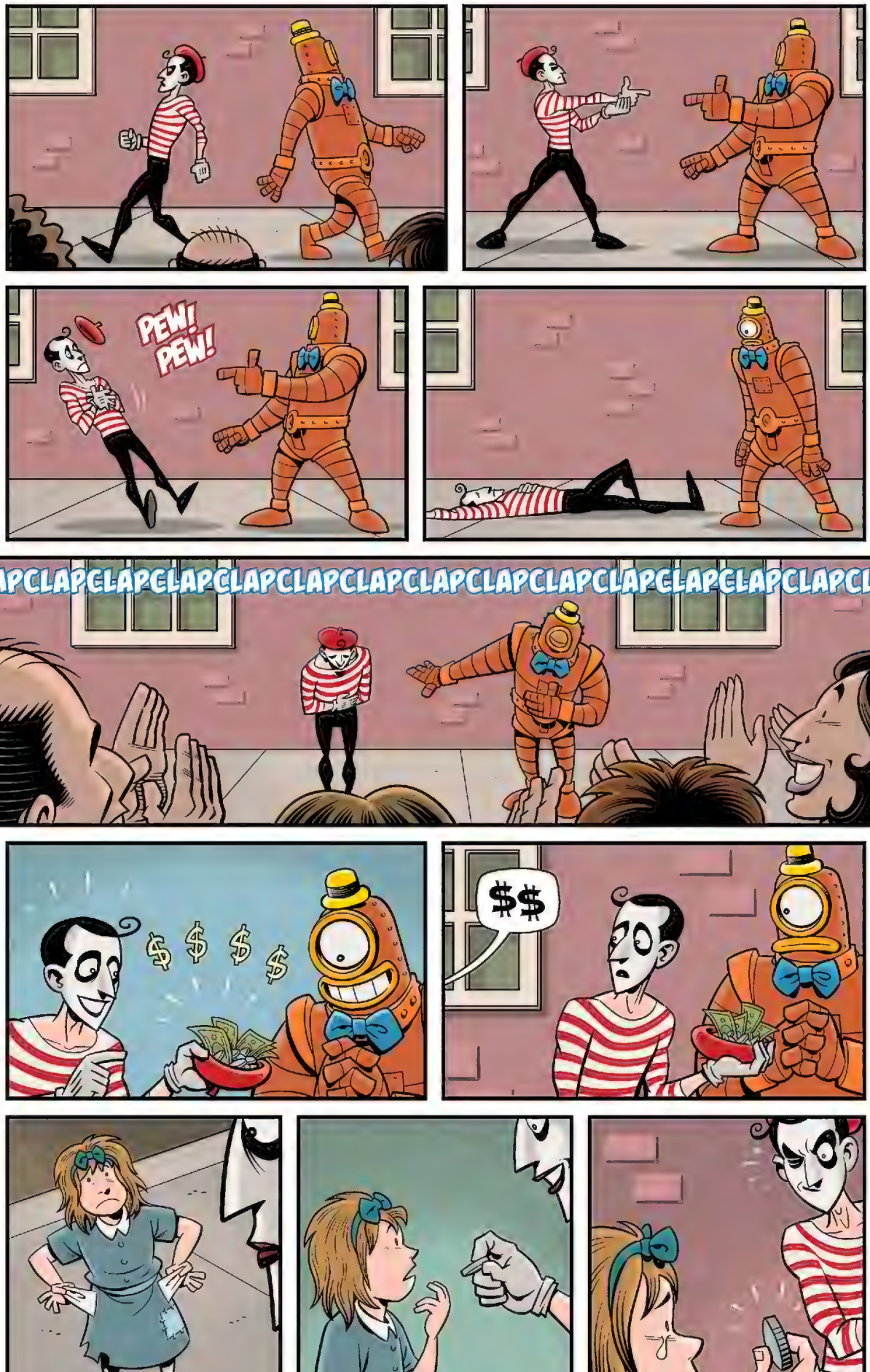
?
BIPZZ BIPP.
UNIT 75
"MARCEL"
POSSIBLY DEFECTIVE
BIP BIP!!

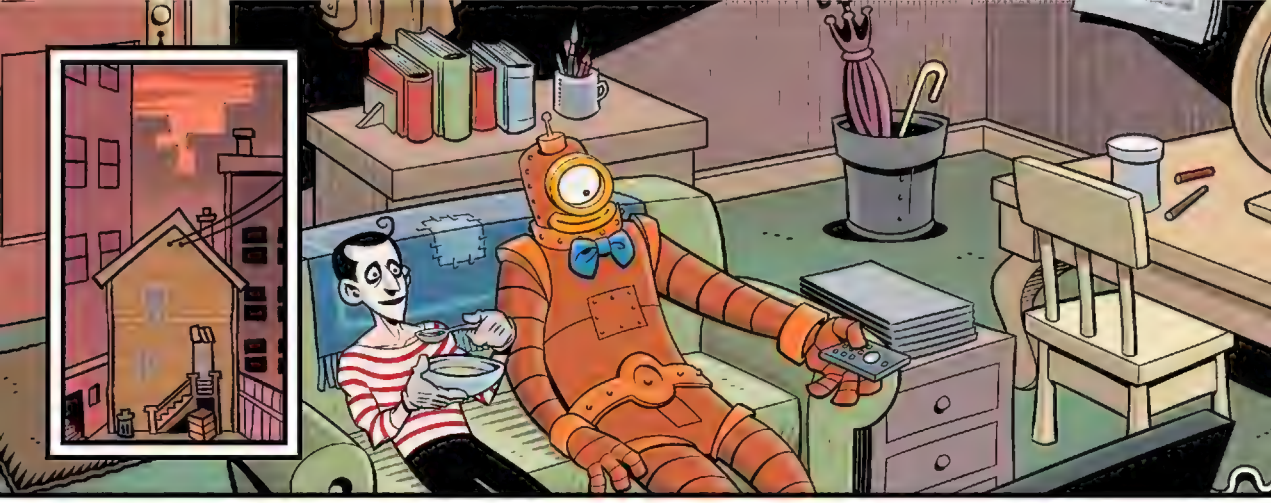
BIP
BIP.




CLAPCLAPCLAPCLAPCLAPCLAP



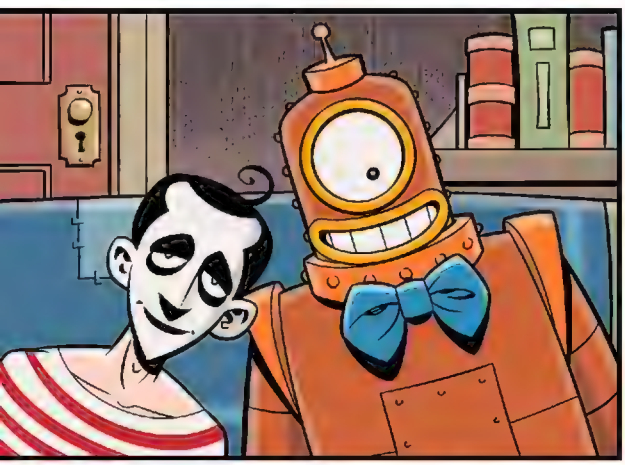

PEW!
PEW!
CLAPCLAPCLAPC

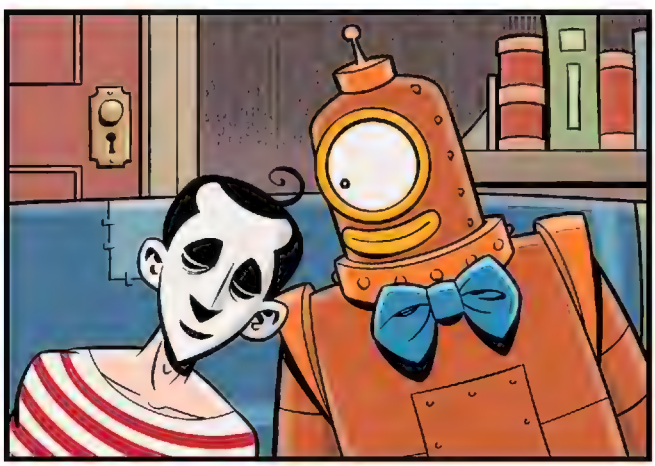


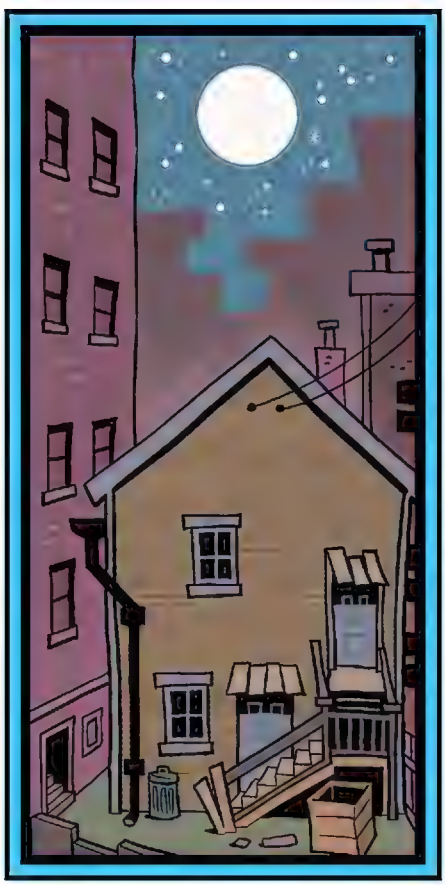
GOOD
NEWS!

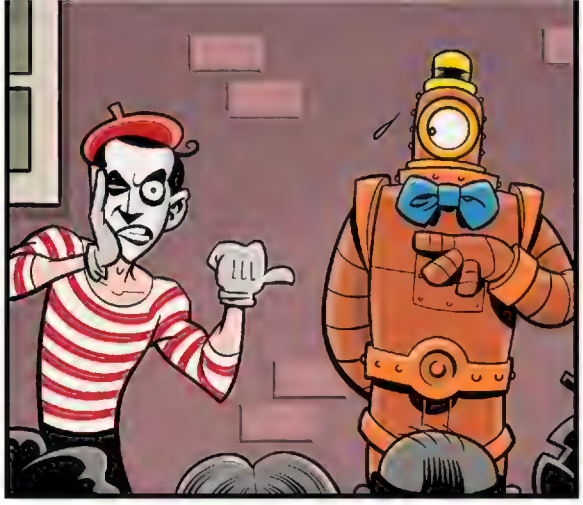
MUT

BUT
WILL IT
LAST?

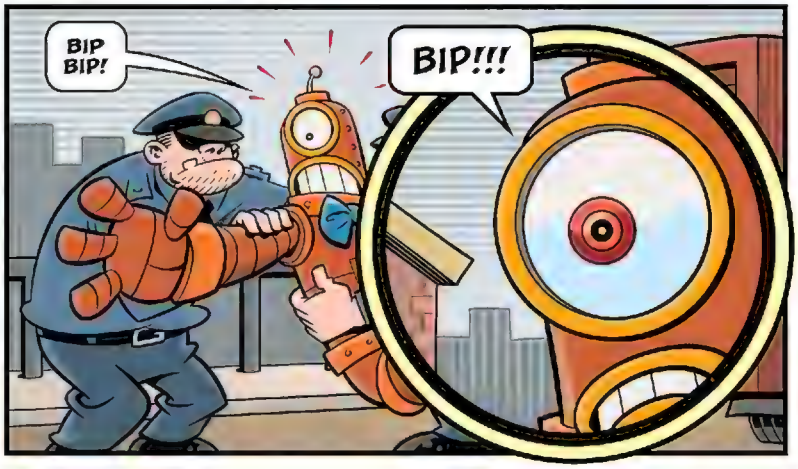








REQUISITION REQUEST: UNIT 75: "MARCEL" Property of J.C. WILBER LABS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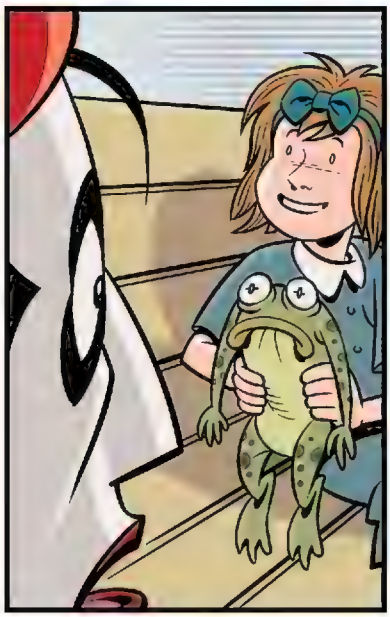
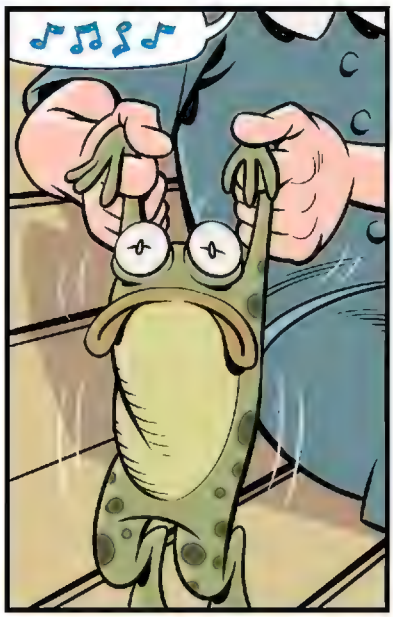
BIP!!!





REQUISITION REQUEST:
UNIT 75:
"MARCEL"
Property of
J.C. WILBER
LABS

J. WILBER LAB
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O!
AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY

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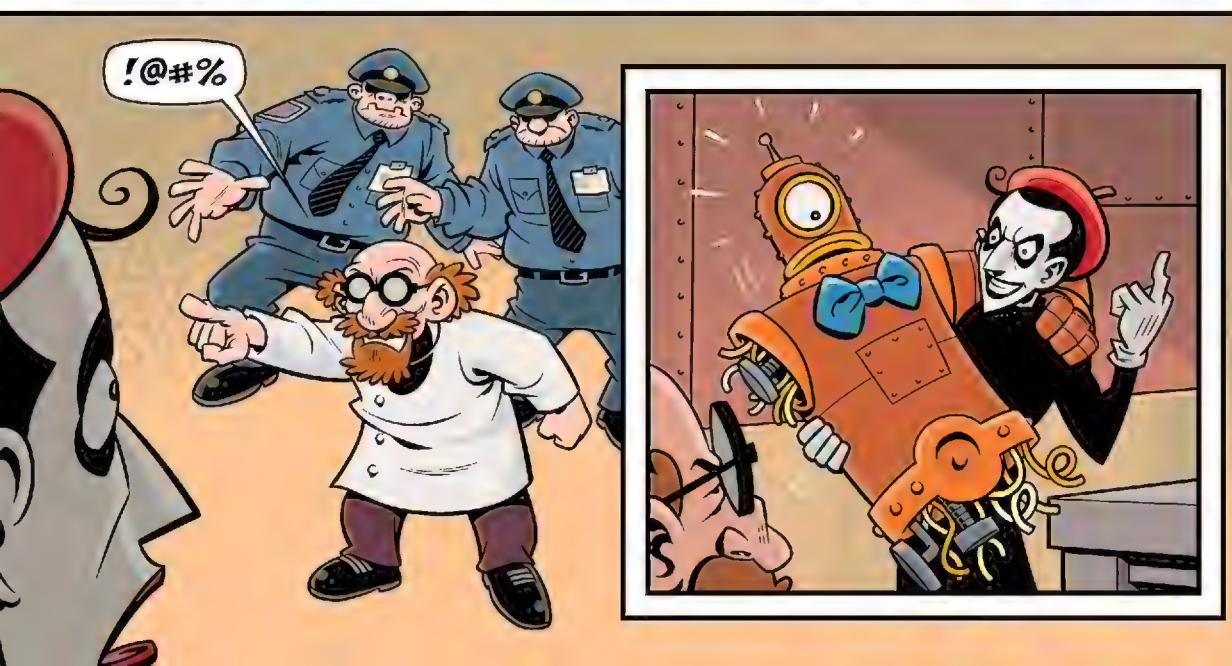

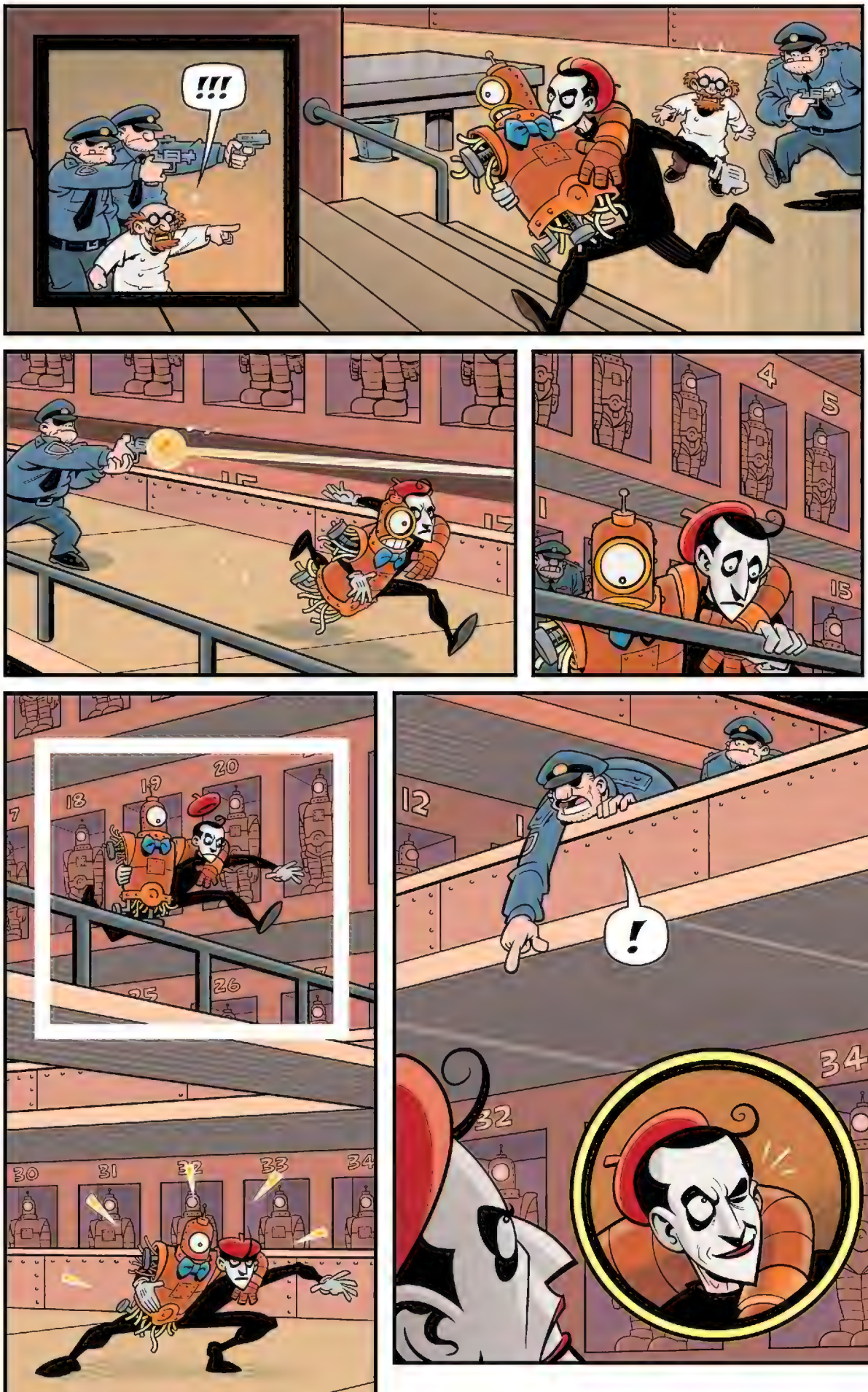
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RIBBIT.
RIBBIT.
PEW PEW.
PEW.

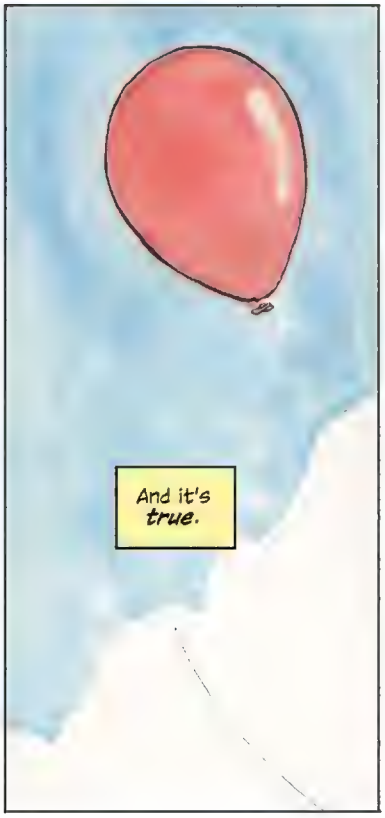
CHAPTER
FOUR

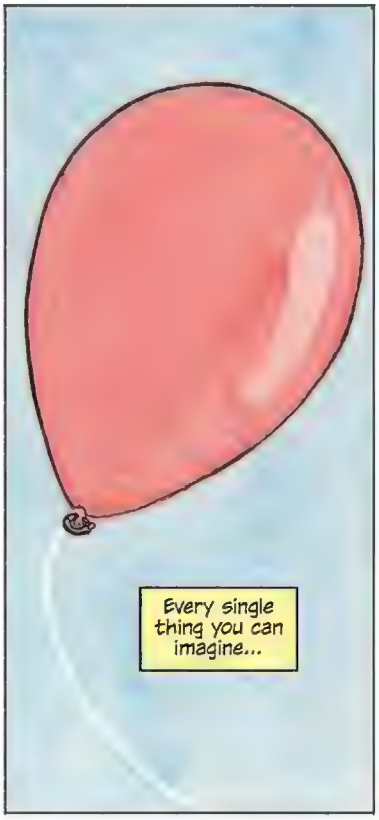
CHAPTER 4

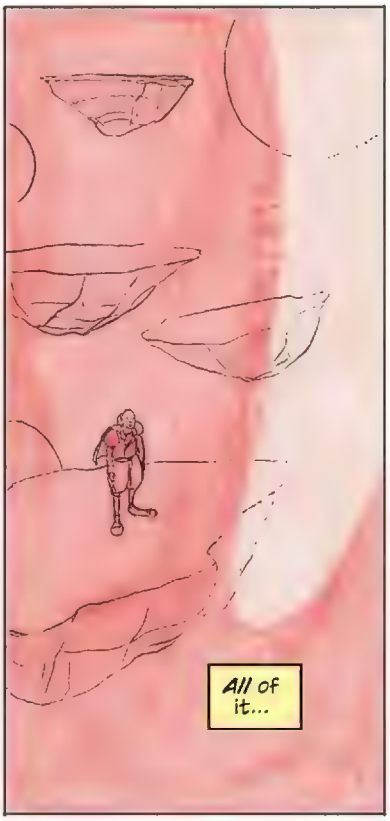
GUSTAV IN THE WORLD OF FLOATING OBJECTS

PATRICK HORVATH

A wise clown once said that everything floats.


And it's *true*.


Every single thing you can imagine...


All of it...

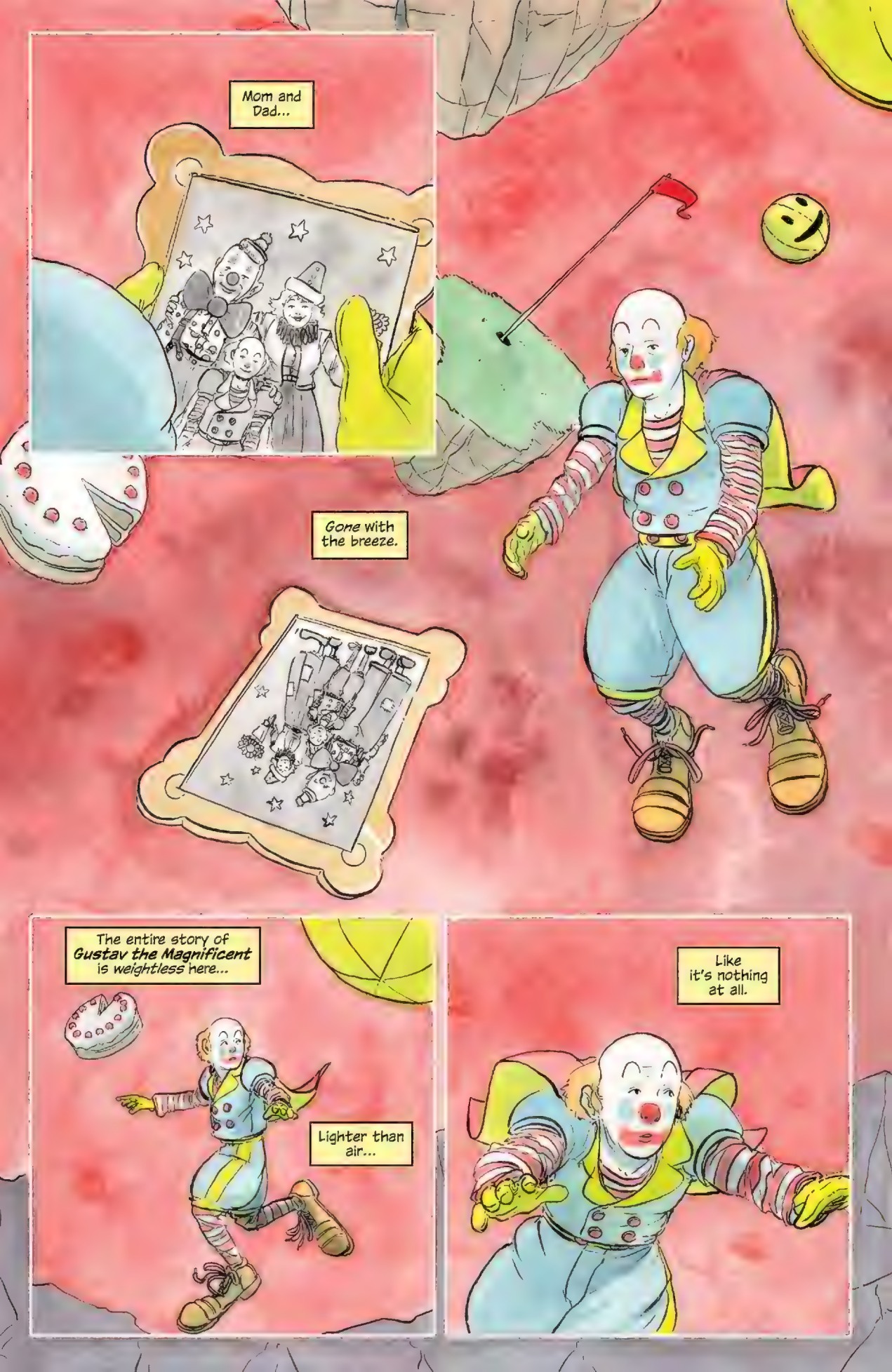
It's up there.

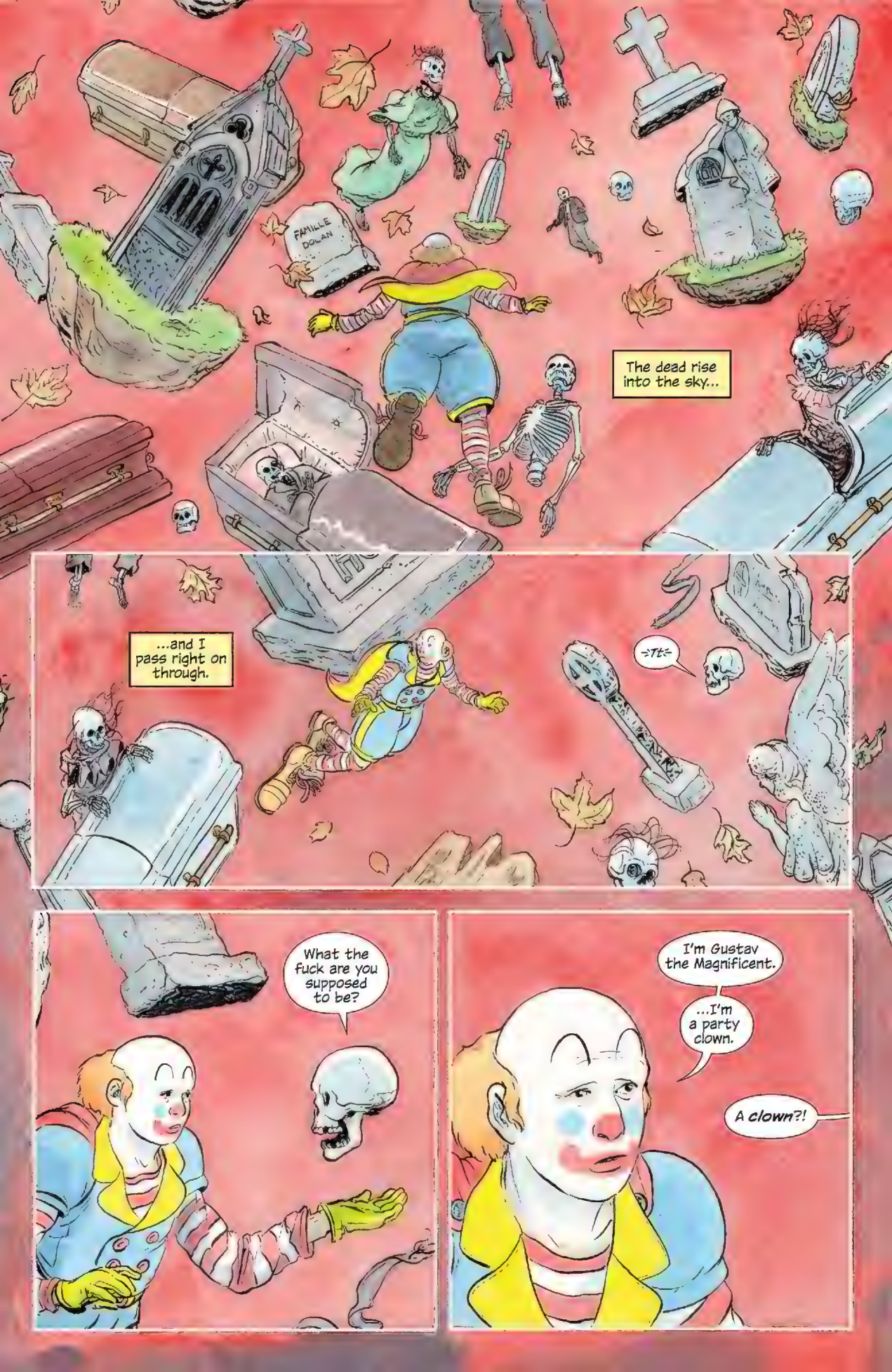
Golly...
The tuba floats; the French horn floats.
Fido floats; Missus Whiskers floats.
Me, too.
I float.
...up, up, and away.
"I'm not making it up. He went inside the balloon..."

HAPPY BIRTHDAY
...shrunk down real small and just... disappeared.
Like magic.
I'm gonna call the service tomorrow and file a formal complaint.
Two hundred bucks for an absentee clown!
HAPPY BIRTHDAY
You can still see it up there if you squint your eyes.
I'm sorry he ruined your birthday party, honey.
Can I shrink small, too?
Gustav didn't shrink, Chris.
He probably snuck out the back gate and walked to a bar...
I could smell it on him the second he showed up.

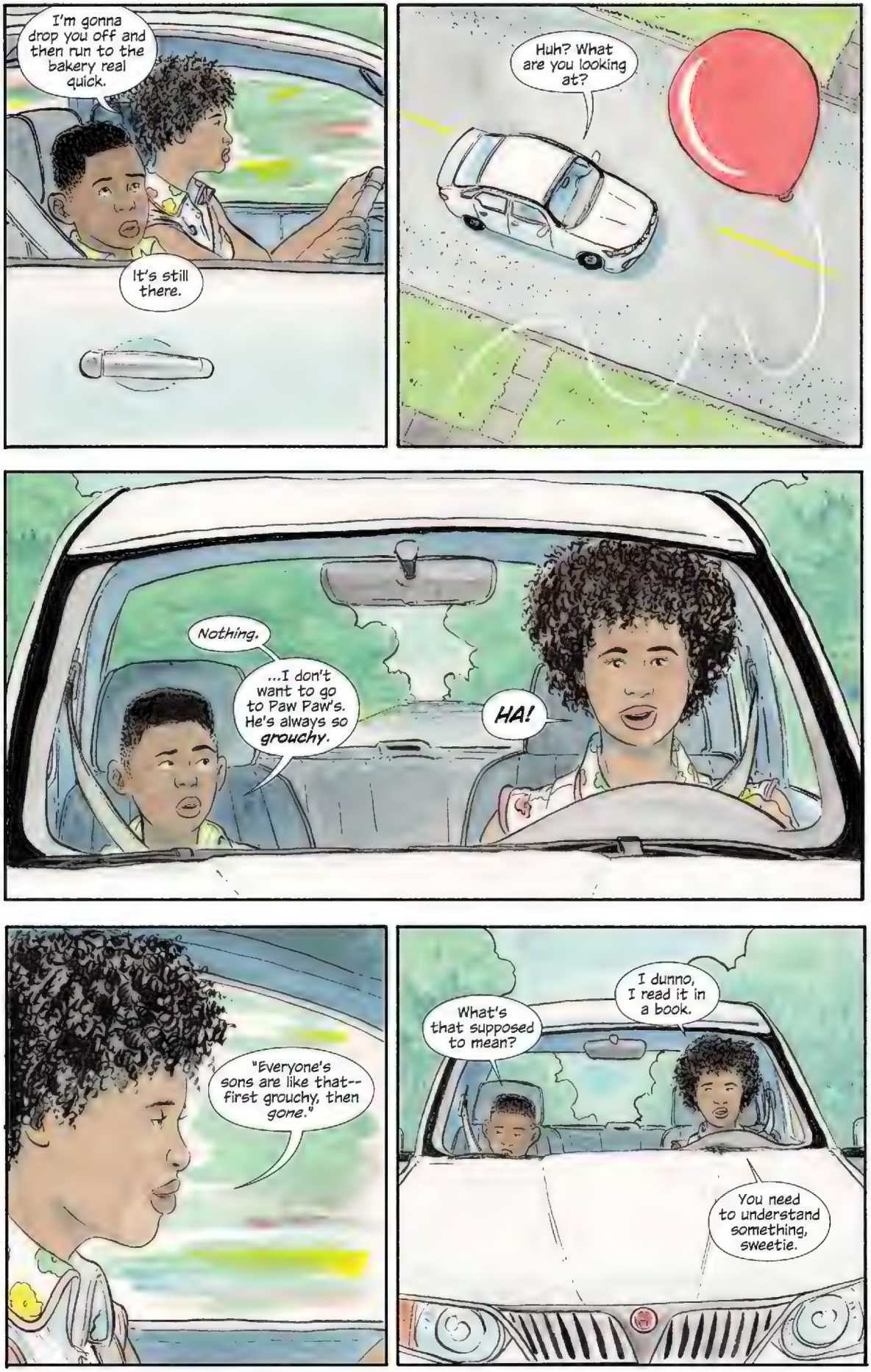
People don't just disappear.
What about Dad?
Ha ha.
I'd pay good money to see your father get sucked into a balloon.
...at least then he'd have an excuse for missing alimony.
Now put on a nice shirt.
We're driving over to Paw Paw's place for presents and cake.
Gift boxes float.

The decorative ribbon floats.
The stuff inside, too...
Toy planes, beginner harmonicas, *picture frames.*
Family pictures-- they float.


Mom and Dad...
Gone with the breeze.
The entire story of *Gustav the Magnificent* is weightless here...
Lighter than air...
Like it's nothing at all.


FAMILLE DOLAN
The dead rise into the sky...
...and I pass right on through.
-rt-
What the fuck are you supposed to be?
I'm Gustav the Magnificent.
...I'm a party clown.
A clown?!

Jesus Christ. This place just gets sadder and sadder.
My childhood, my divorce, my studio apartment...
My anger, my codependency, my loneliness...
They're full of helium.
Good boy.
They drift away.
Good riddance!
"Are you listening?"


I'm gonna drop you off and then run to the bakery real quick.
It's still there.
Huh? What are you looking at?
Nothing.
...I don't want to go to Paw Paw's. He's always so grouchy.
HA!
"Everyone's sons are like that--first grouchy, then gone."
What's that supposed to mean?
I dunno, I read it in a book.
You need to understand something, sweetie.

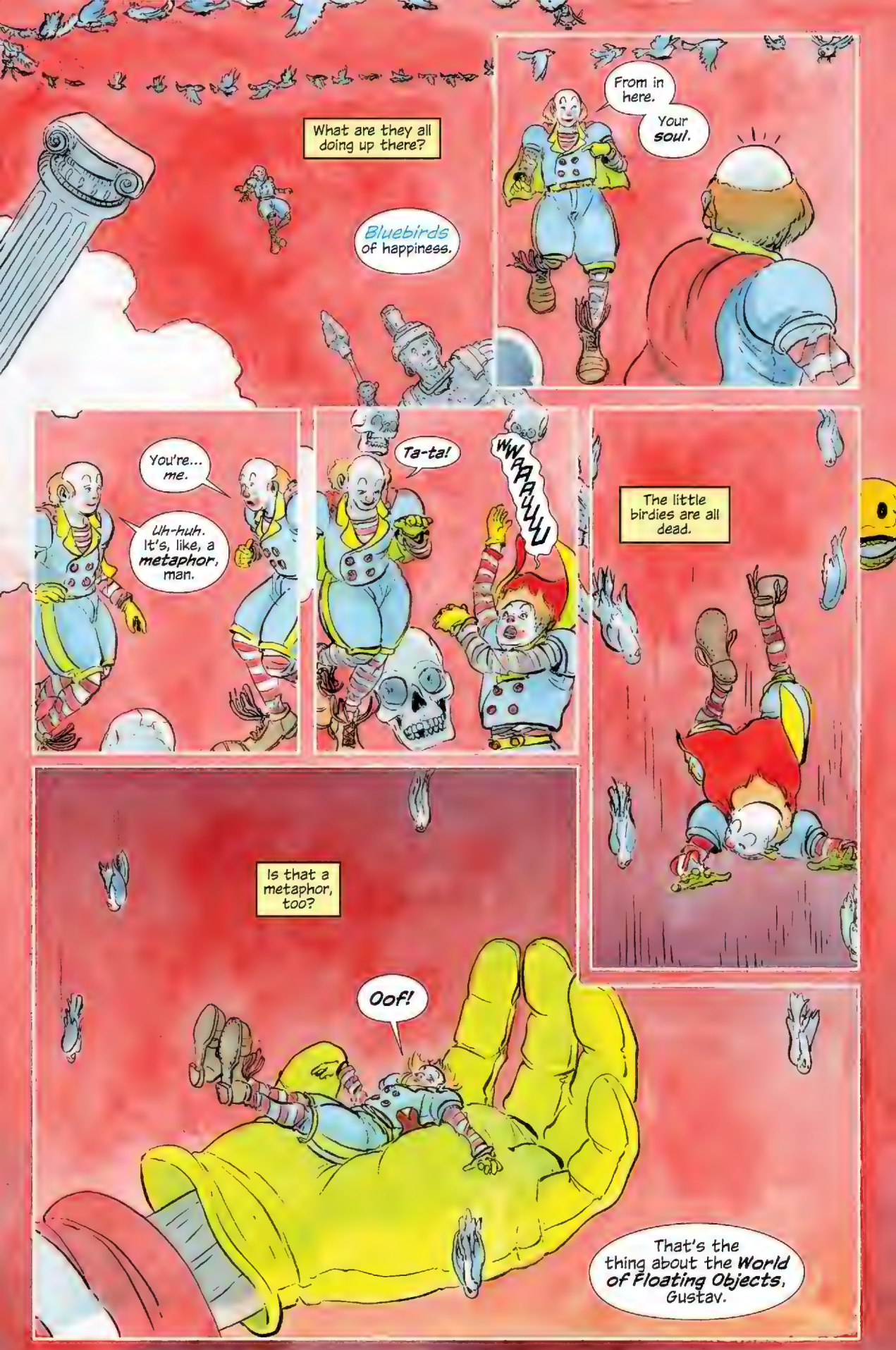
You were too small to remember her, but your Memaw was an *amazing* woman.
She did everything for your grandfather.
Everything.
...he just hasn't been the same since she passed away.
No one has.
Is it ice cream cake at least?
-Tt!- I'm not at liberty to say.
Some things are just a *mystery.*
Stonehenge floats.

At least I *think* it's Stonehenge.
I'm not exactly the most *worldly* person; I don't know a lot about important rocks.
Now there's a man of *sophistication*...
You look like a clown that's spent some time on the ***top shelf.***
Am I right or am I right?
Me? Oh, no...
I'm actually trying to quit.
No you're not.
How'd you get here, anyhow?
I was working this party and then shrank down small into one of my balloons.

I had a feeling you'd say something like that.
Everyone's always saying the weirdest stuff to me.
"I got lost in the balloon."
"I fell into the shower drain."
"The TV sucked me inside!"
It's all the same shit, man.
How do I get out of here?
HA!
No one leaves this place, Chuckles.
Once you're here, that's ballgame!
"We're here!"

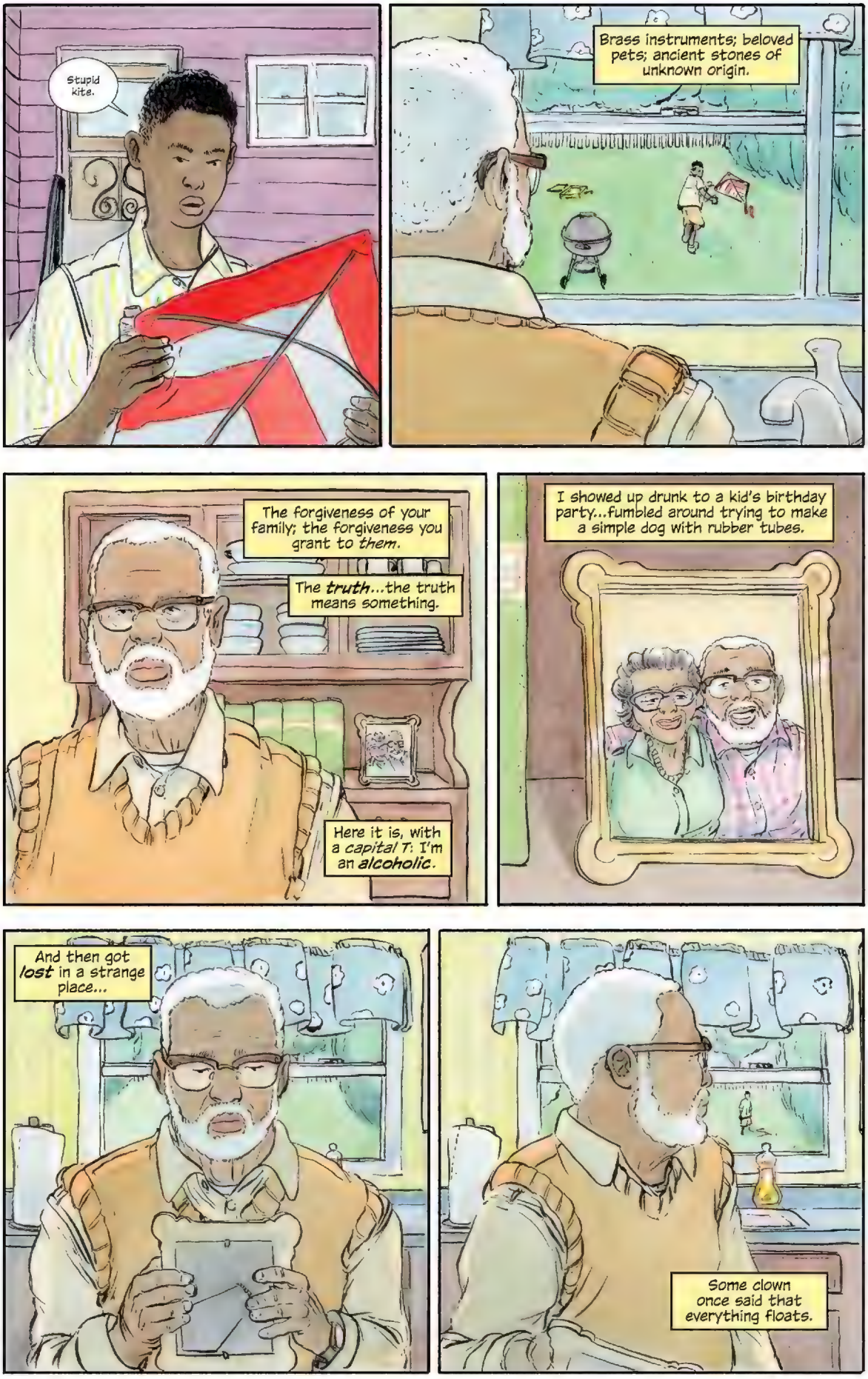
Dad!
I'm in the living room!
I just watched the most *ridiculous* program.
Who calls it a "*program*" anymore?
There was this man...about my age...
He ties hundreds of balloons to his house and flies all the way to South America.
Just like that! His whole Tudor single family--*up* it goes!
...what a load of ***horse shit.***
I *like* that movie...
Aren't you *forgetting* something, Pop?
What? What is it?

It's my birthday.
I *knew* that.
I know when it's my only grandson's birthday!
I need to go pick up the cake.
Just be nice for an hour, please.
"Nice." All I am is nice!
Here, Chrissy.
One of many.
Why don't you go play with it outside?
I don't know what I'm looking at...

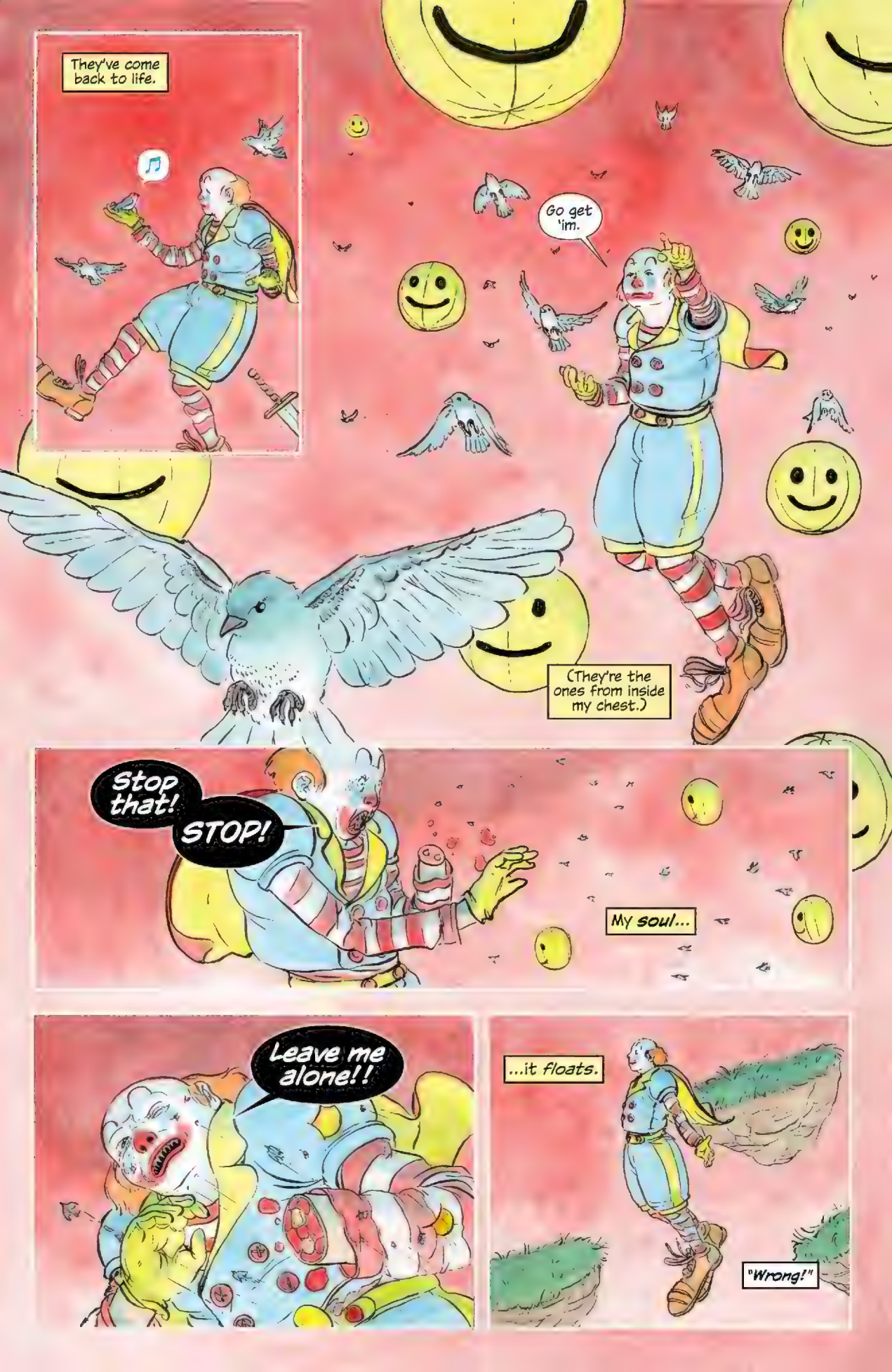

What are they all doing up there?
Bluebirds of happiness.
From in here.
Your soul.
You're... me.
Uh-huh. It's, like, a metaphor, man.
Ta-ta!
WWAAAUUU
The little birdies are all dead.
Is that a metaphor, too?
Oof!
That's the thing about the World of Floating Objects, Gustav.

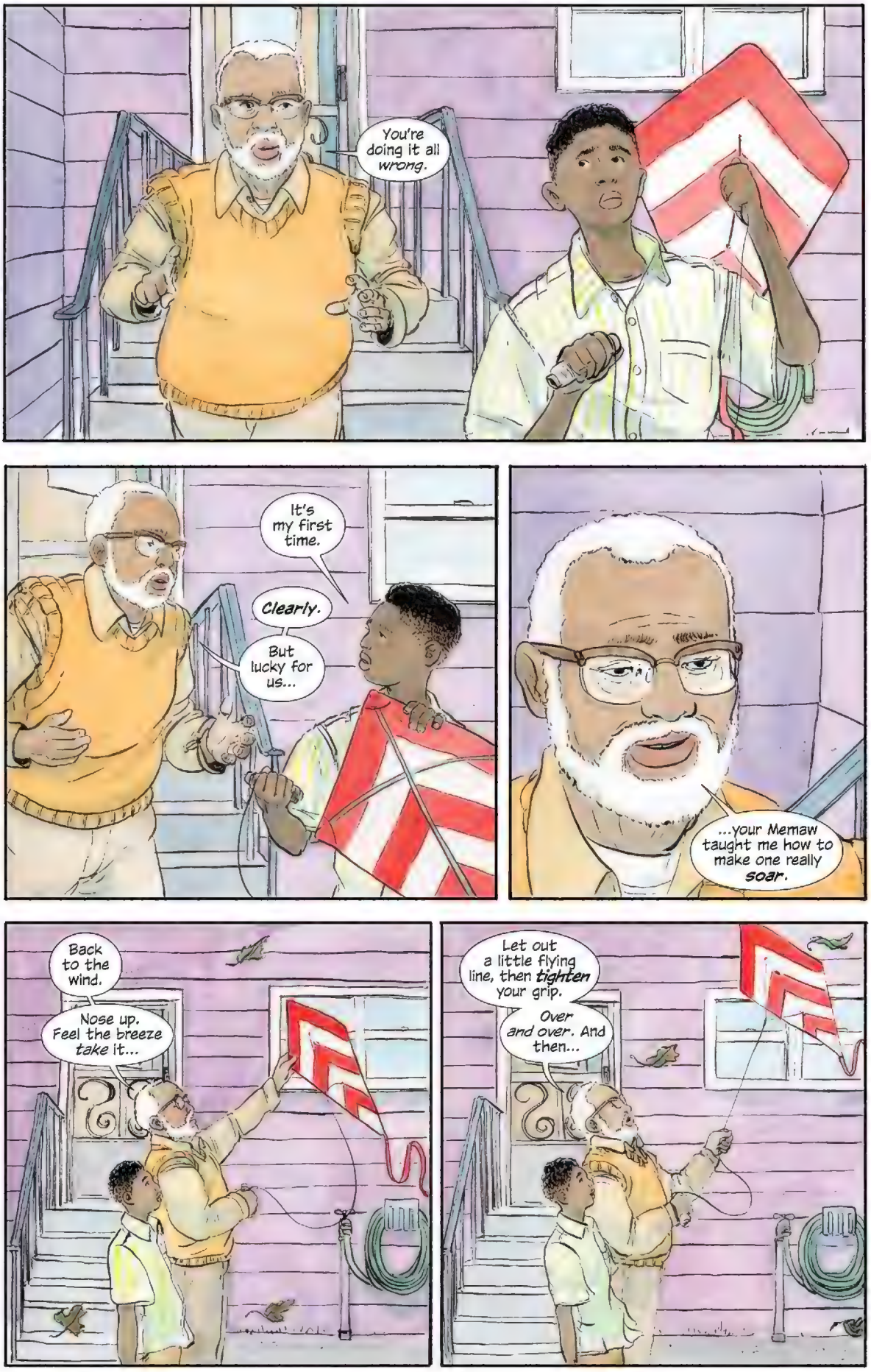
Everything means nothing.
Huh? That can't be right...
Can it?

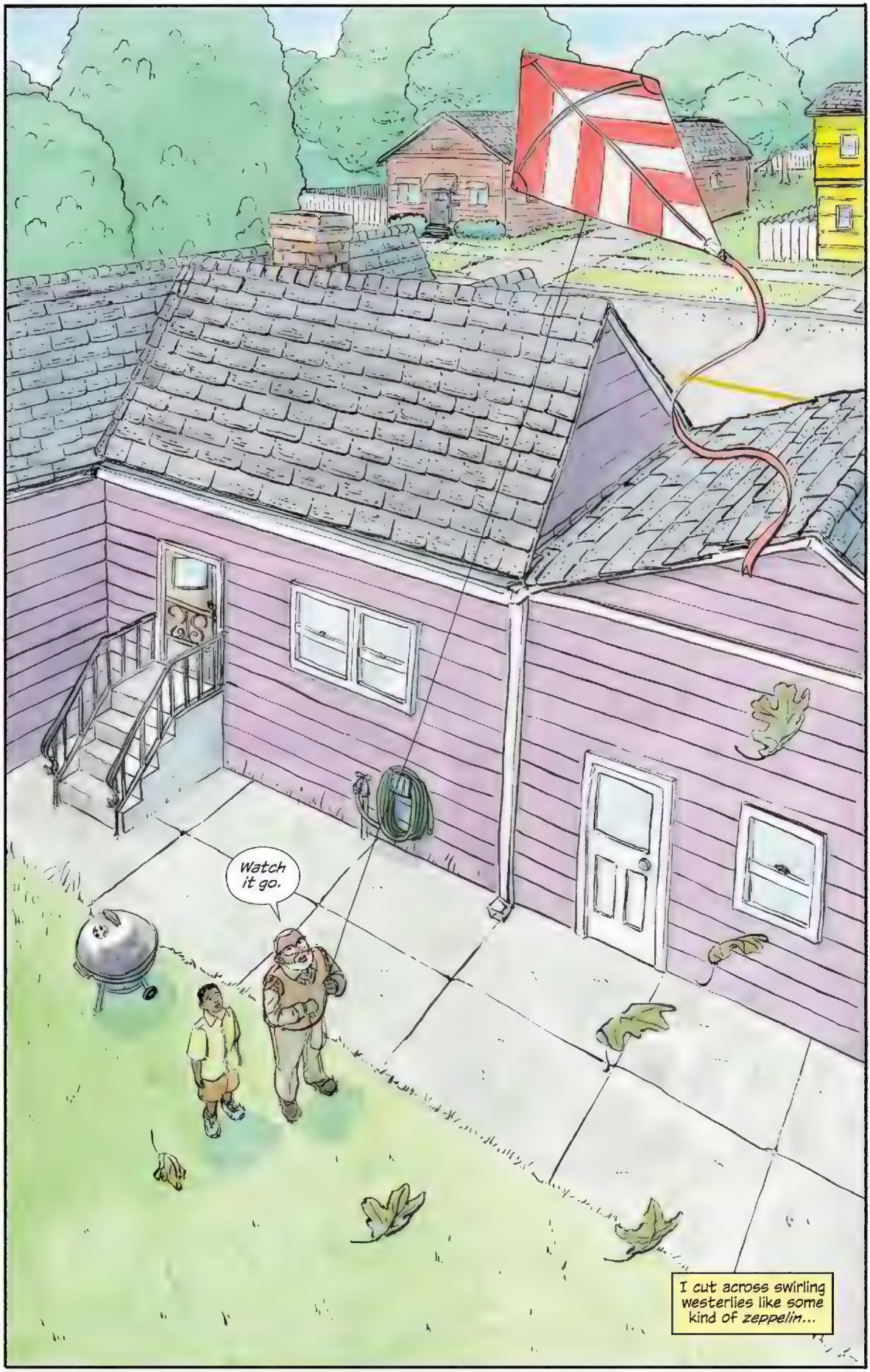
Some things--
small things--mean a *lot*.
Look and see them hanging in the air:
Sunbeams on a bright day; the wind stirring tops of trees.
The way passengers on a boat wave to people on shore.
-:Tt:-


Stupid kite.
Brass instruments; beloved pets; ancient stones of unknown origin.
The forgiveness of your family; the forgiveness you grant to *them*.
The ***truth***...the truth means something.
Here it is, with a *capital T*: I'm an ***alcoholic***.
I showed up drunk to a kid's birthday party...fumbled around trying to make a simple dog with rubber tubes.
And then got ***lost*** in a strange place...
Some clown once said that everything floats.

...boy was he ever right!
Hahaha
CHYAH!
The blue-birds...


They've come back to life.
Go get 'im.
(They're the ones from inside my chest.)
Stop that!
STOP!
My soul...
Leave me alone!!
...it floats.
"Wrong!"


You're doing it all wrong.
It's my first time.
Clearly.
But lucky for us...
...your Memaw taught me how to make one really soar.
Back to the wind.
Nose up. Feel the breeze take it...
Let out a little flying line, then tighten your grip.
Over and over. And then...


Watch it go.
I cut across swirling westerlies like some kind of zeppelin...

...and glide through a canyon with the Thanksgiving Day parade.
On and on through a World of Floating Objects.
I, ladies and gentlemen, am Gustav the Magnificent.
See ya!
I make balloon animals for kids.

Also: I'm lonely, lost, and a *miserable drunk.*
But that's okay.
All that ***stuff*** ain't heavy, man.
In fact, it's lighter than a feather.
Float on, Fuzzy.
Eventually I'll find a way out of this place.
And when I do...
I'm gonna try to be better.
"Look at him..."

Now *that's* a program worth watching.
Ice cream cake. His favorite.
Mine, too.
You guys have a *lot* in common.
All these years later, I'm *still* surprised when I wake up and she's not there.
I just...
I *know* it can't be easy, having to deal with a crotchety old widower.
I'll try to do better.
It *followed* us all the way here!

"Magnificent."
It can't be.
Some things are a *mystery*, sweetheart.
I always told you.
Here, Paw Paw. You can have it.
It's ***perfect!***
We can tie it to the chimney...

...a couple hundred more and who knows what could happen?

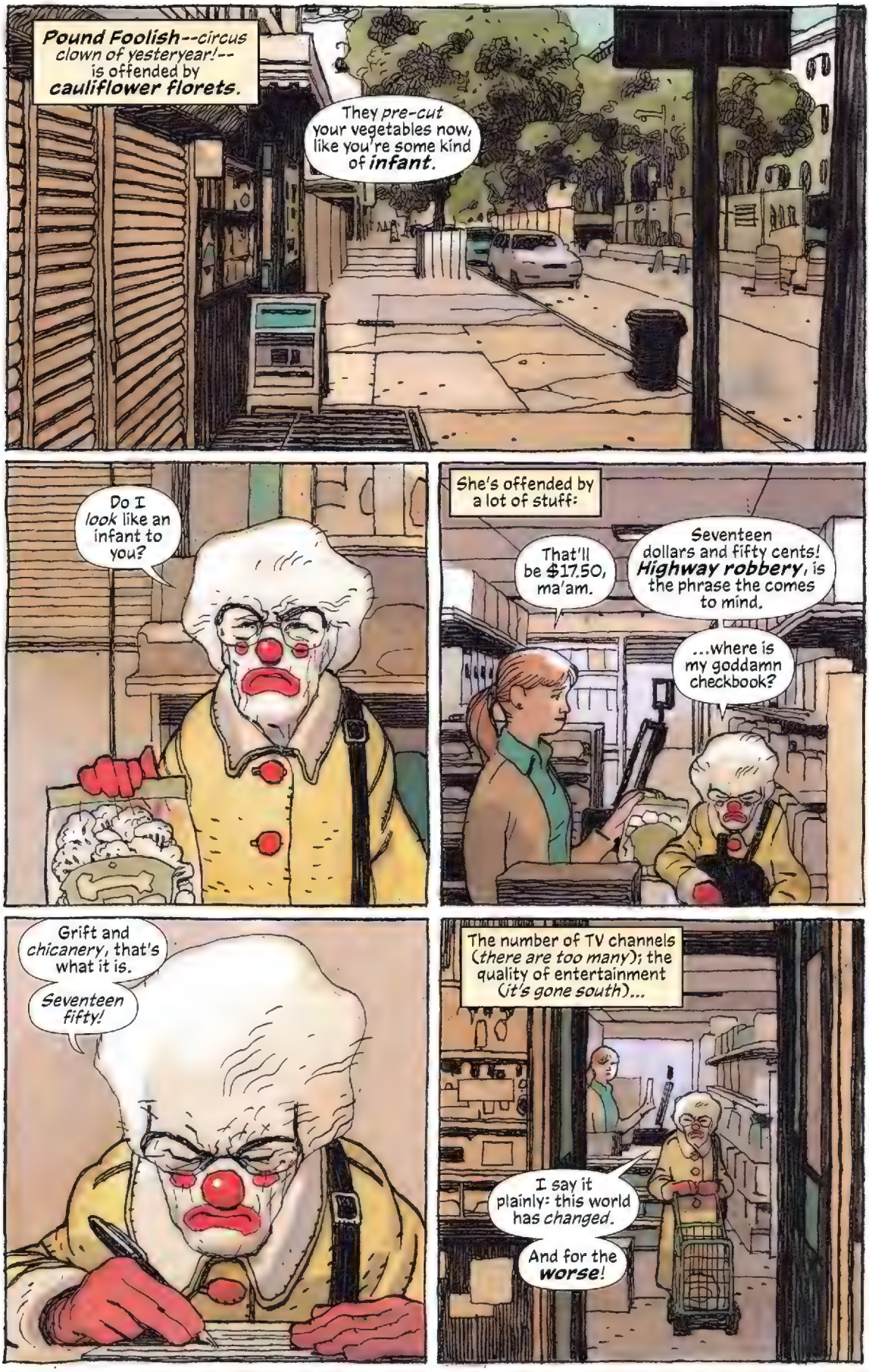
CHAPTER
FIVE
GHW
2020

CHAPTER 5

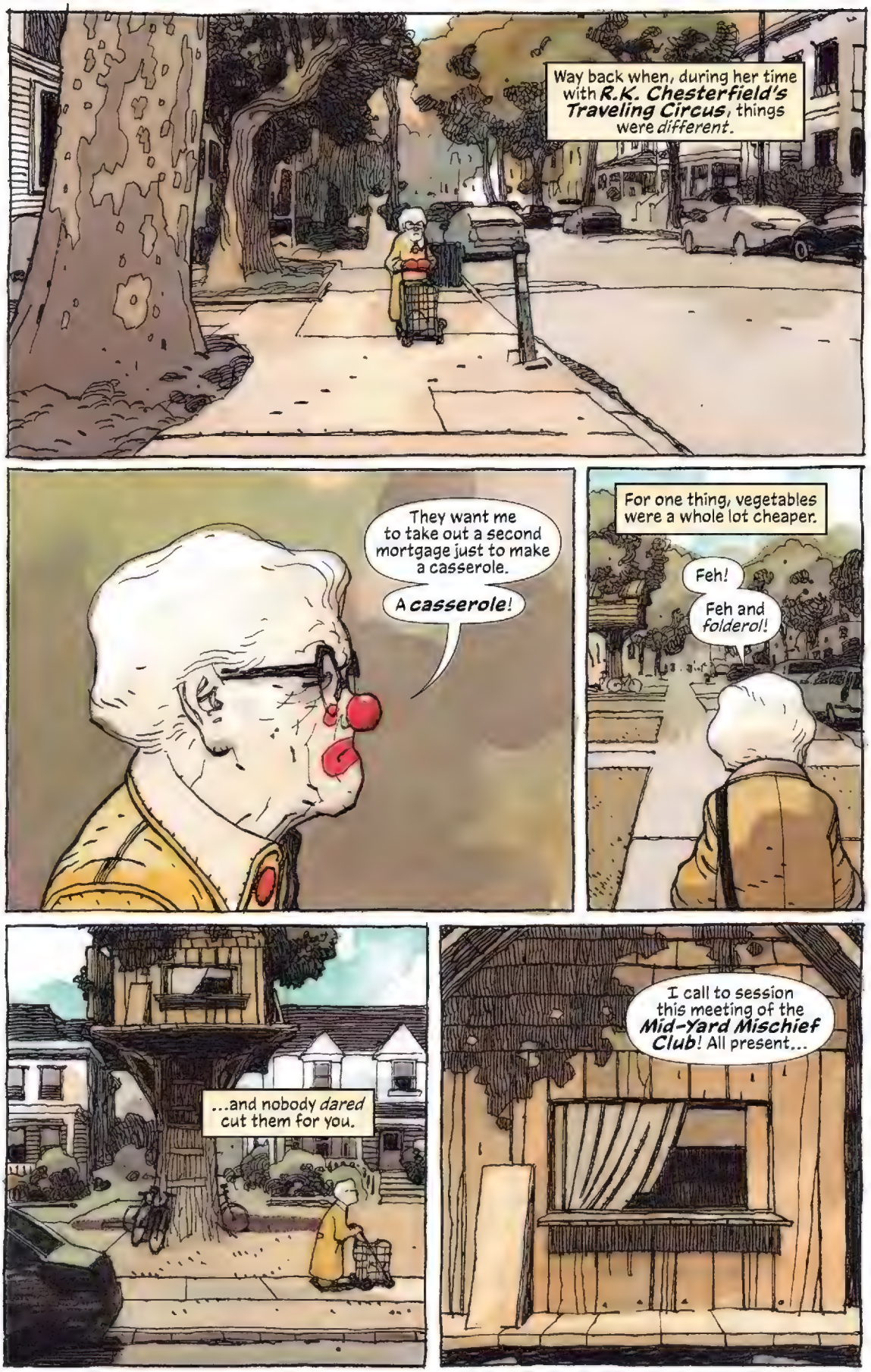
POUND FOOLISH MAKES A CASSEROLE

ART

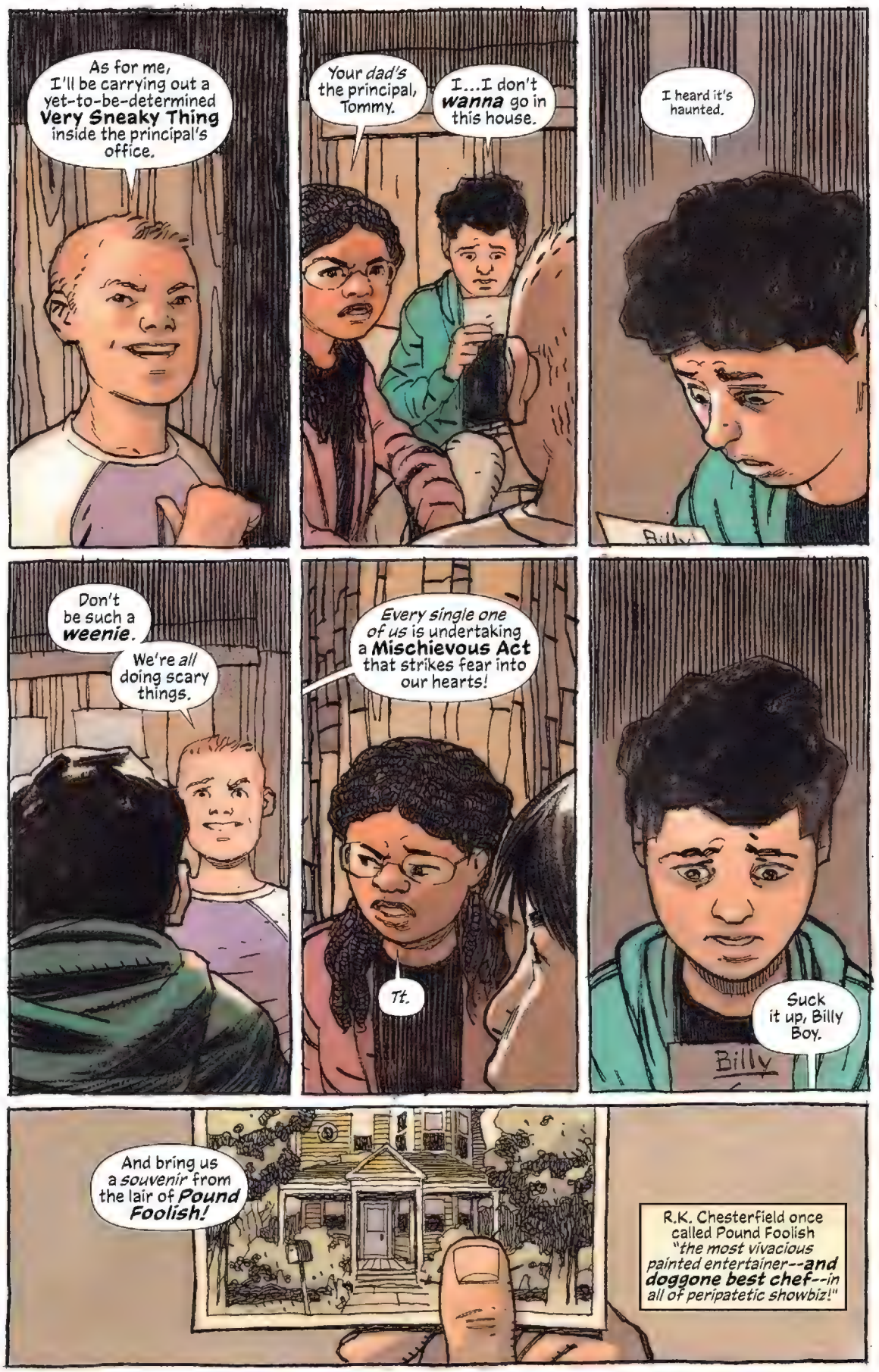
GABRIEL HERNÁNDEZ WALTA


Pound Foolish--circus clown of yesteryear!-- is offended by **cauliflower florets.**
They *pre-cut* your vegetables now, like you're some kind of ***infant***.
Do I *look* like an infant to you?
She's offended by a lot of stuff:
That'll be $17.50, ma'am.
Seventeen dollars and fifty cents! ***Highway robbery***, is the phrase the comes to mind.
...where is my goddamn checkbook?
Grift and *chicanery*, that's what it is.
Seventeen fifty!
The number of TV channels (*there are too many*); the quality of entertainment (*it's gone south*)...
I say it plainly: this world has *changed*.
And for the ***worse***!

Debased! All of it.
Dogs off their leashes; kids out past curfew; loud music in public places...
The stares of strangers...
God Almighty, where'd the life I know run off to?
?
Where'd it go?
It's a list of grievances a few miles long--and it gains new items every day.
Mom, what's--
I honestly have no idea.


Way back when, during her time with R.K. Chesterfield's Traveling Circus, things were different.
They want me to take out a second mortgage just to make a casserole.
A casserole!
For one thing, vegetables were a whole lot cheaper.
Feh!
Feh and folderol!
...and nobody dared cut them for you.
I call to session this meeting of the Mid-Yard Mischief Club! All present...

AYE!
The first order of business: *your mischief assignments.*
Billy
Leo
Blossom
Membership requires all of us to partake in at least one **Very Sneaky Act** per year.
It's in the bylaws, which I wrote in the back of my math notebook.
Blossom, you'll be spray-painting our **sigil**--*a winky face* --onto the side of the old pharmacy.
I'm the Mischief Queen.
Blossom
Leo, you're gonna take chicken eggs from Mr. King's farm on the edge of town.
My mom buys her milk from here!
And Billy, *you've* got to steal something ***spooky*** from that crazy old clown lady's house.
Wh-what?
Billy


As for me, I'll be carrying out a yet-to-be-determined **Very Sneaky Thing** inside the principal's office.
Your *dad's* the principal, Tommy.
I...I don't ***wanna*** go in this house.
I heard it's haunted.
Billy
Don't be such a ***weenie***.
We're *all* doing scary things.
Every single one of us is undertaking a **Mischievous Act** that strikes fear into our hearts!
Tt.
Suck it up, Billy Boy.
Billy
And bring us a *souvenir* from the lair of ***Pound Foolish!***
R.K. Chesterfield once called Pound Foolish "*the most vivacious painted entertainer--**and doggone best chef**--in all of peripatetic showbiz!*"

When did they start making keys so tiny?
And he wasn't kidding.

When she wasn't juggling with *Merry Andrew*, or squirting water onto onlookers from a novelty rose-shaped brooch...
They use to be bigger!
Afternoon, Miss Foolish!

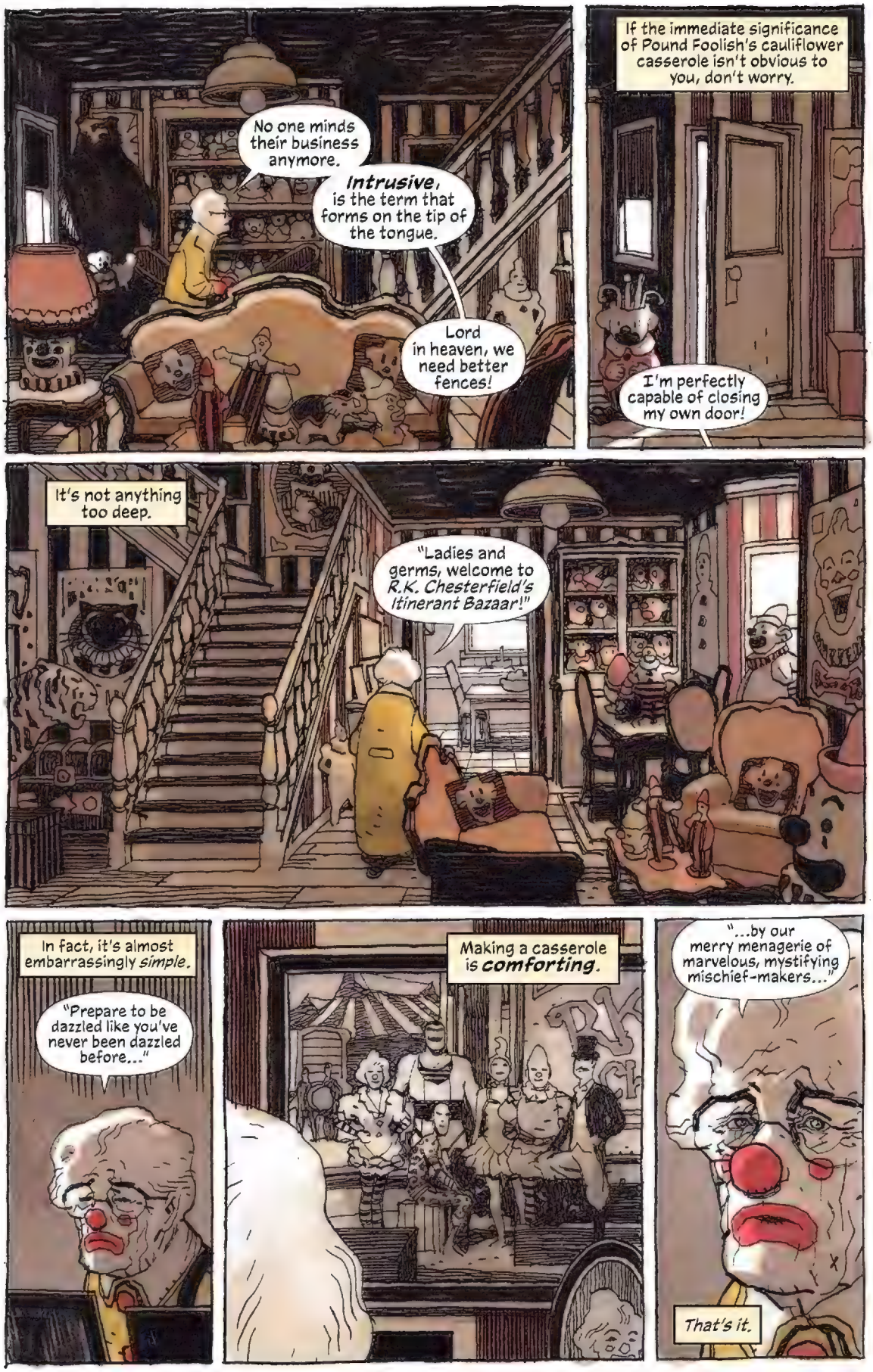
Do I know you?
It's me, Paul. From next door?
We've been neighbors for fifteen years...

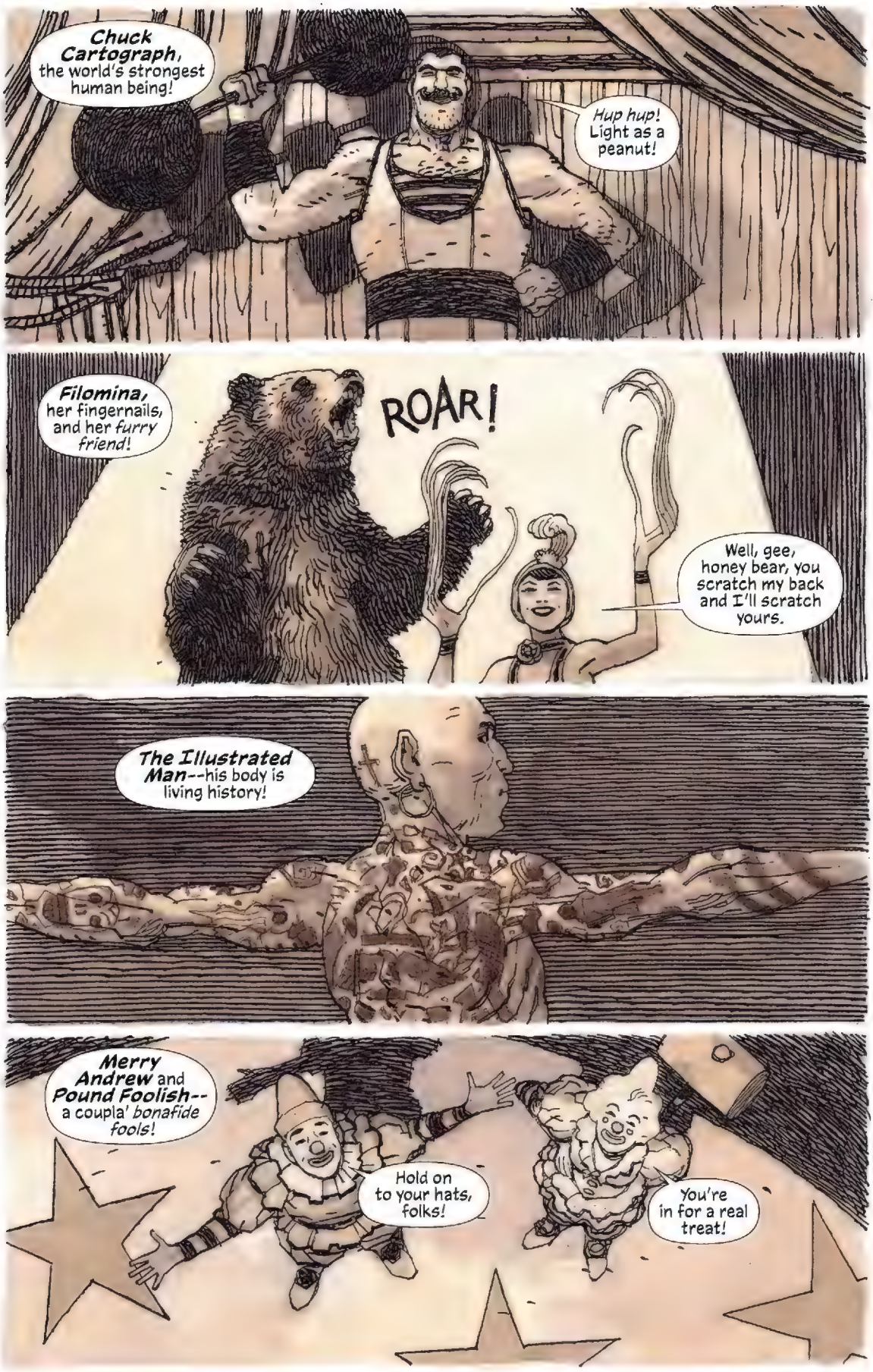
Pound Foolish *cooked* for the traveling circus folk.
Paul. That's right. You're the one whose *wife* left him.
For the taller man.

I just wanted to let you know that you left your *door* open again.
You really ought to be more careful...someone could have walked right in.

Her specialty?
You wanna know what my daddy used to say, Mister Paul?

"*Good fences make good neighbors.*"
A cauliflower casserole.


No one minds their business anymore.
Intrusive, is the term that forms on the tip of the tongue.
Lord in heaven, we need better fences!
If the immediate significance of Pound Foolish's cauliflower casserole isn't obvious to you, don't worry.
I'm perfectly capable of closing my own door!
It's not anything too deep.
"Ladies and germs, welcome to *R.K. Chesterfield's Itinerant Bazaar!*"
In fact, it's almost embarrassingly *simple*.
"Prepare to be dazzled like you've never been dazzled before..."
Making a casserole is ***comforting***.
"...by our merry menagerie of marvelous, mystifying mischief-makers..."
That's it.


Chuck Cartograph, the world's strongest human being!
Hup hup! Light as a peanut!
Filomina, her fingernails, and her furry friend!
ROAR!
Well, gee, honey bear, you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours.
The Illustrated Man--his body is living history!
Merry Andrew and Pound Foolish-- a coupla' bonafide fools!
Hold on to your hats, folks!
You're in for a real treat!

And who doesn't like a little bit of comfort food?
"Hold on to your hats, folks. You're in for a treat."
Oh, Mister Chesterfield. This *world*. Be happy you aren't here to see it...
High in calories; high in carbohydrates.
Debased. From top to bottom.
High in nostalgia; high in sentimental association...
"Florets." *Feh!*
Folderol!

The creamy, buttery stuff of our youth.

Alright, gang...
Go forth in *shenanigans*.
I'm the frickin' *Queen*, y'all!
Catch ya later, jerkwads.
Good luck, Billy.
May your *funny business* be fruitful.
Now, for posterity, here are the **ingredients** and **cooking directions** for Pound Foolish's beloved dish:

We start, of course, with the main attraction: **cauliflower**. (These are pre-cut, as you might know by now.)
Then: one cup of sour cream.
One-half cup of crushed corn-flakes. (You can use breadcrumbs here if you prefer a starchier, *crumblier* consistency.)
One cup of shredded cheddar cheese.
One-fourth cup of chopped green pepper.
One-fourth cup of chopped sweet red pepper.
One-fourth cup of grated *Parmigiano-Reggiano*.
Salt and paprika (to taste).
And a winning disposition.
Let's get cooking.

First, some water in a saucepan.
Boil the cauliflower, then reduce heat and simmer until *nice and crisp*.
In a large bowl, combine the cauliflower, sour cream, cheddar cheese, cornflakes, peppers, and salt.
...use those *biceps*--like Charlie Cartograph would do!
Sprinkle with the Parmigiano and paprika, then transfer everything to a greased baking dish.
...half an hour at 325° will do just fine.
And *voila*.
Ambrosia, is the word that suggests itself.

I hate you, Tommy.
I'm *not* a weenie...
I'm the goddamn ***Prince of Shenanigans.***

Years from now, Billy will better understand the desire to surround oneself with the things of the past.
He'll maintain his own collection of mementos and *tchotchkes* and bygone memorabilia. (Mostly baseball-related stuff.)
H-holy shit.
He'll cook his own version of comfort food. (Meatloaf and mashed potatoes.)
What--
...but that's years from now.
AAA!

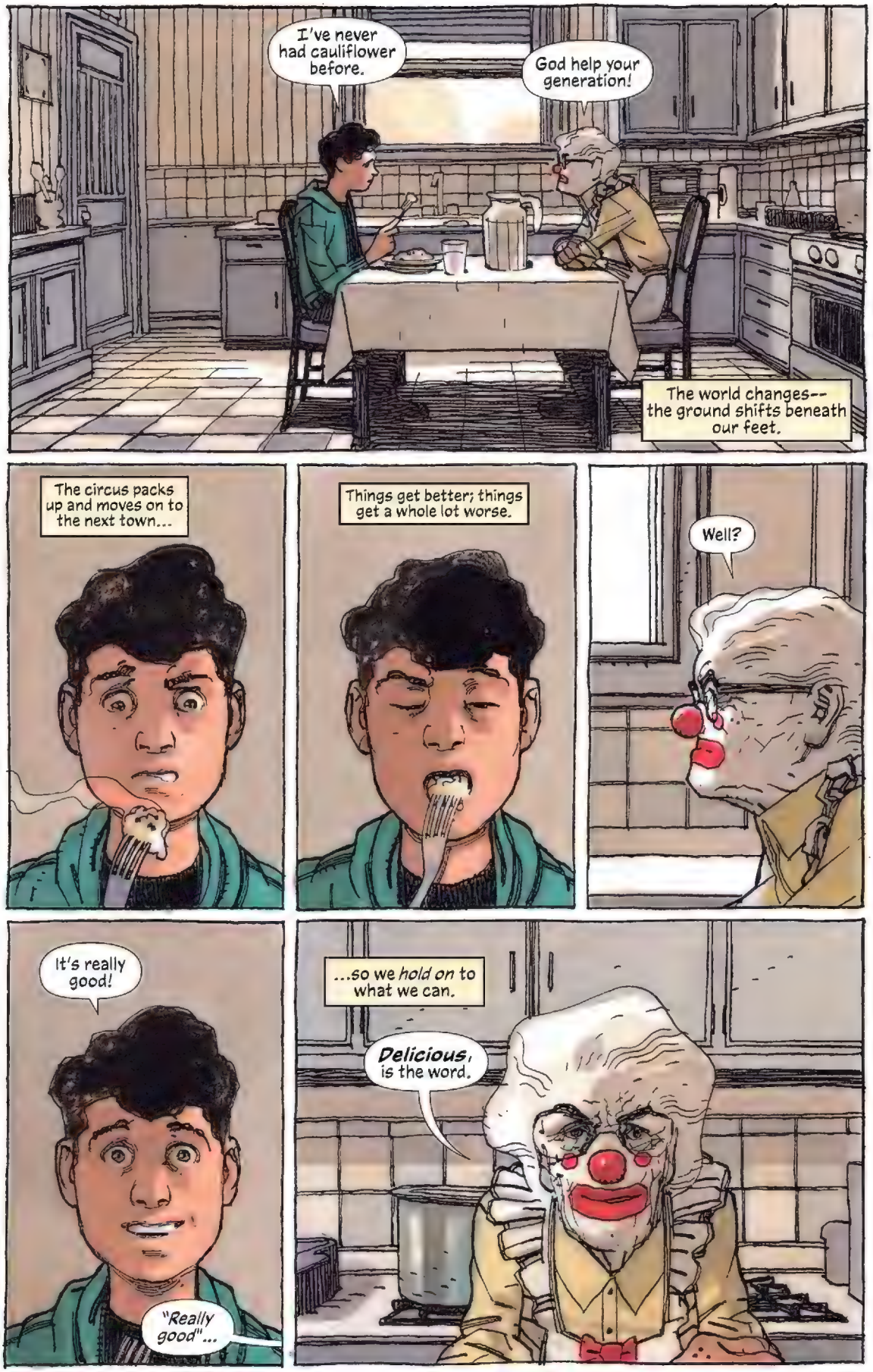
No no no...
How'd you get in here?

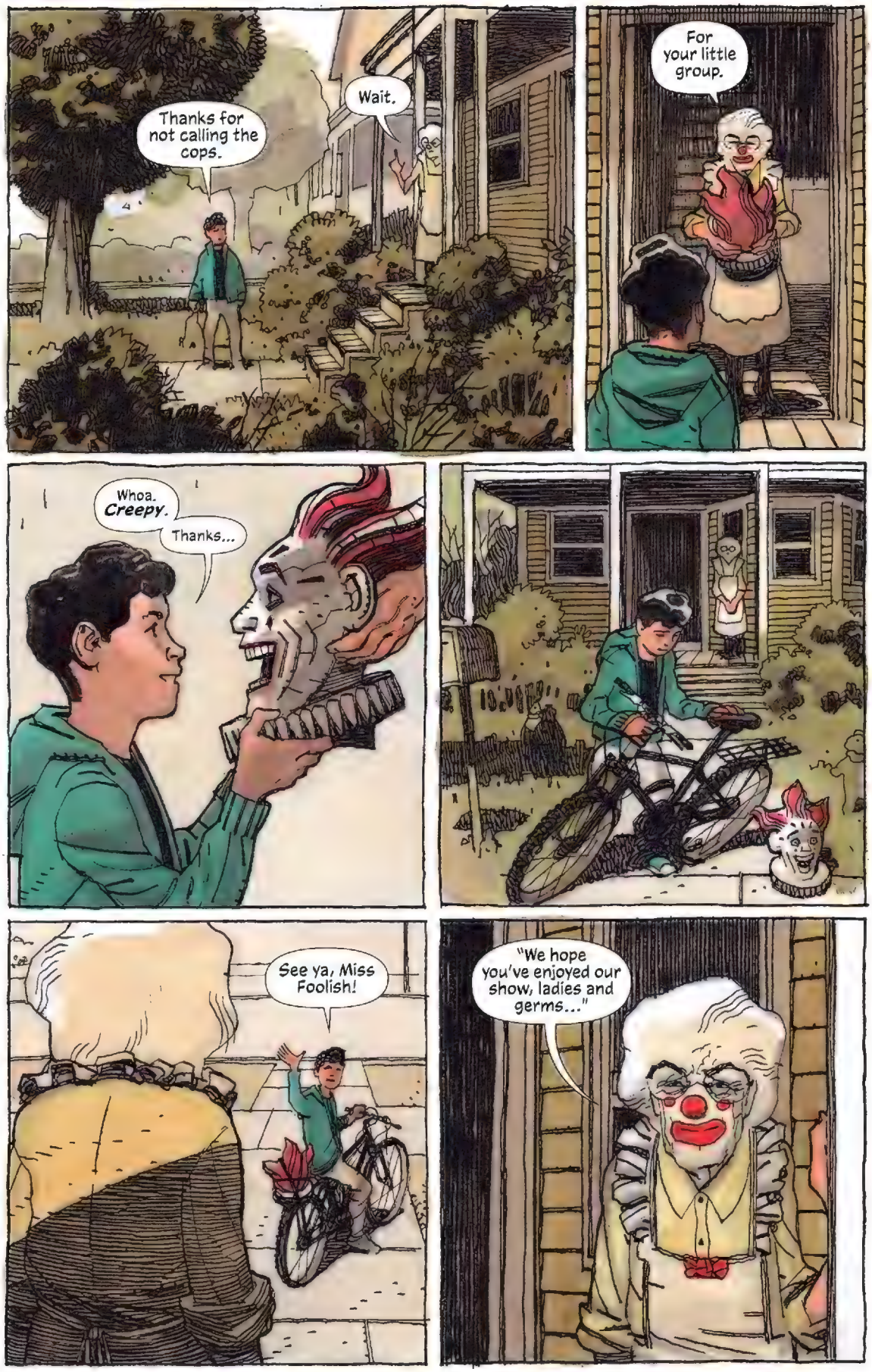
Burglaration and *ransackery*, is what it is!
Get out!
Get out, I said!
uh
*
"Whadda ya say, squirt?"

You ready to see the big *show*?
What is this place?
"What is this place?"
Spoken like a gilly kickin' sawdust!
You've landed your keester smack-dab in the middle of ***R.K. Chesterfield's Traveling Circus.***
The Big Top on Wheels! The Premier Peripatetic Purveyor of Pleasure-inducing Public Performances!
Prepare to be ***dazzled*** like you've never been dazzled before...
...by our merry menagerie of marvelous, *mystifying* mischief-makers...
Chuck Cartograph, Tony Tattoo...meet the ***Prince of Shenanigans.***
I know a brave, strong lad when I see one...
You're made of sturdy stuff!
...I get real scared sometimes...
Shush up, the lot of ya! The clowns are about to do their signature ***gag***...

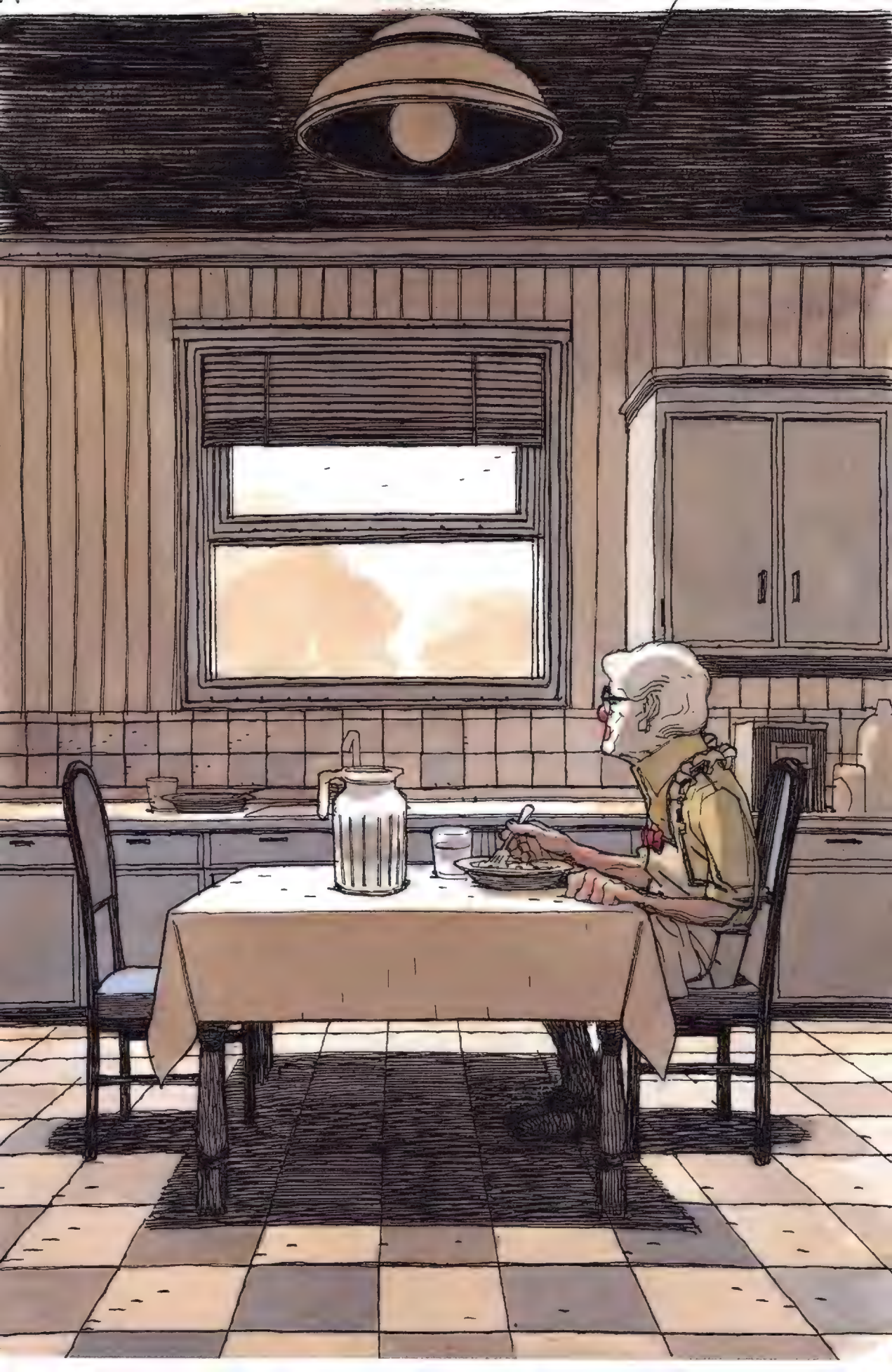
The door's wide open...
Sorry for all that *mischief*, Merry. Friends?
An apology? How ***shocking***!
GAH!
Whoopsie.
Feh! ***Folderol***!!
The *mouth* on this one. Am I right, folks?
She loves me, you know...
And I love her right back.
...it's time to wake up, kid.
Kid?
Kid!

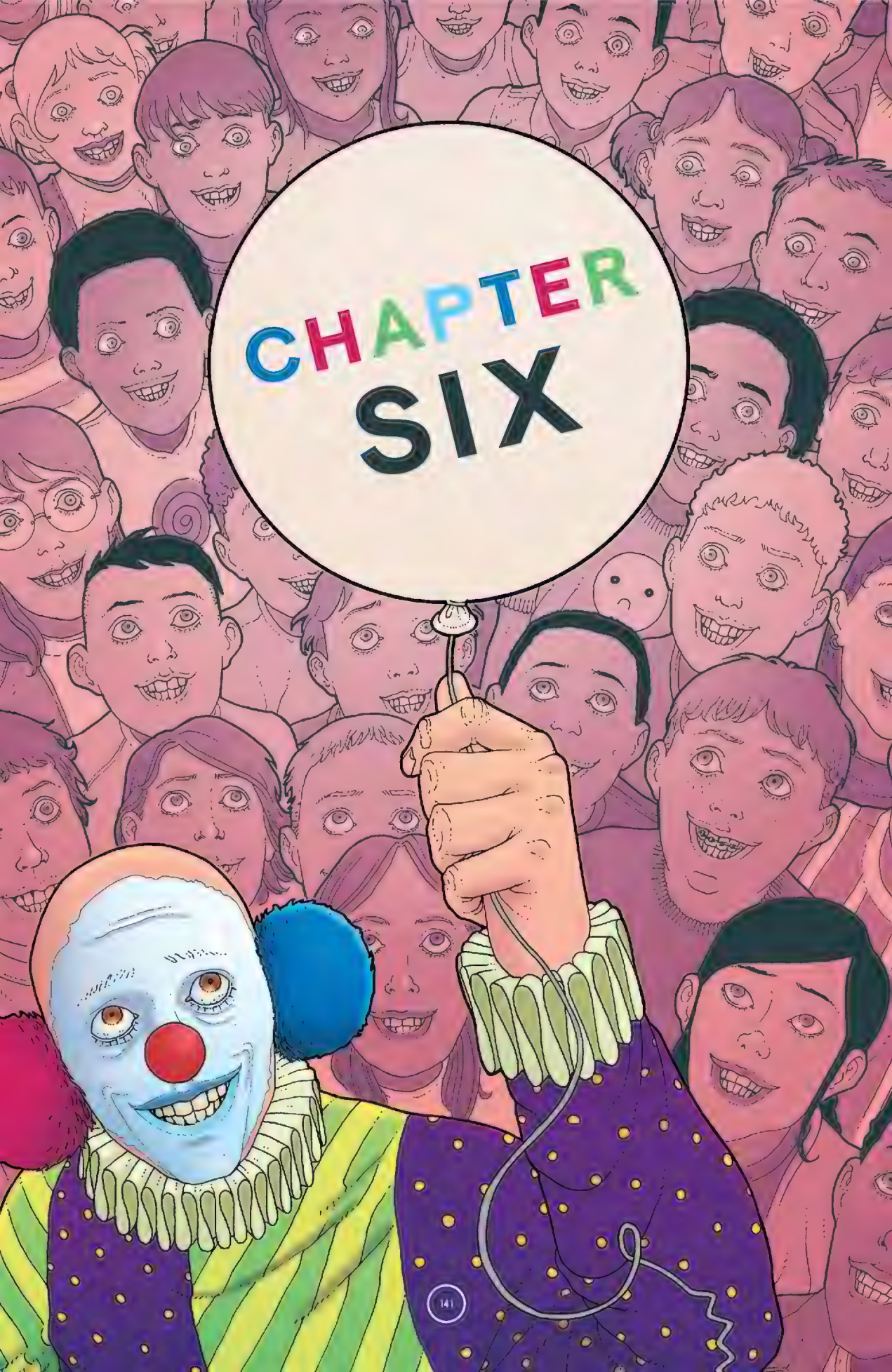
What kind of *burglar* passes out in the middle of the act?
What happened?
You broke into my home and did crime, is what happened! ***Larceny***!
...drink this.
I'm real sorry.
I'm part of a secret club...
So am I.
I hope you brought your appetite, *Mister Mischief*.
There's enough casserole for a whole *troupe*.
See? It's not very complicated.


I've never had cauliflower before.
God help your generation!
The world changes-- the ground shifts beneath our feet.
The circus packs up and moves on to the next town...
Things get better; things get a whole lot worse.
Well?
It's really good!
"Really good"...
...so we *hold on* to what we can.
Delicious, is the word.


Thanks for not calling the cops.
Wait.
For your little group.
Whoa. Creepy.
Thanks...
See ya, Miss Foolish!
"We hope you've enjoyed our show, ladies and germs..."

"But R.K. Chesterfield's Traveling Circus is *all out and all over* for today."
"The tents are coming down, the concession stands are being packed..."
"The animals are back in their cages, sleeping for the night."
"By the grace of God, we'll see you next time our *jolly train* rolls into town..."
We hope you can take some *comfort* in that.




CHAPTER
SIX

CHAPTER 6

HAPPY HANK

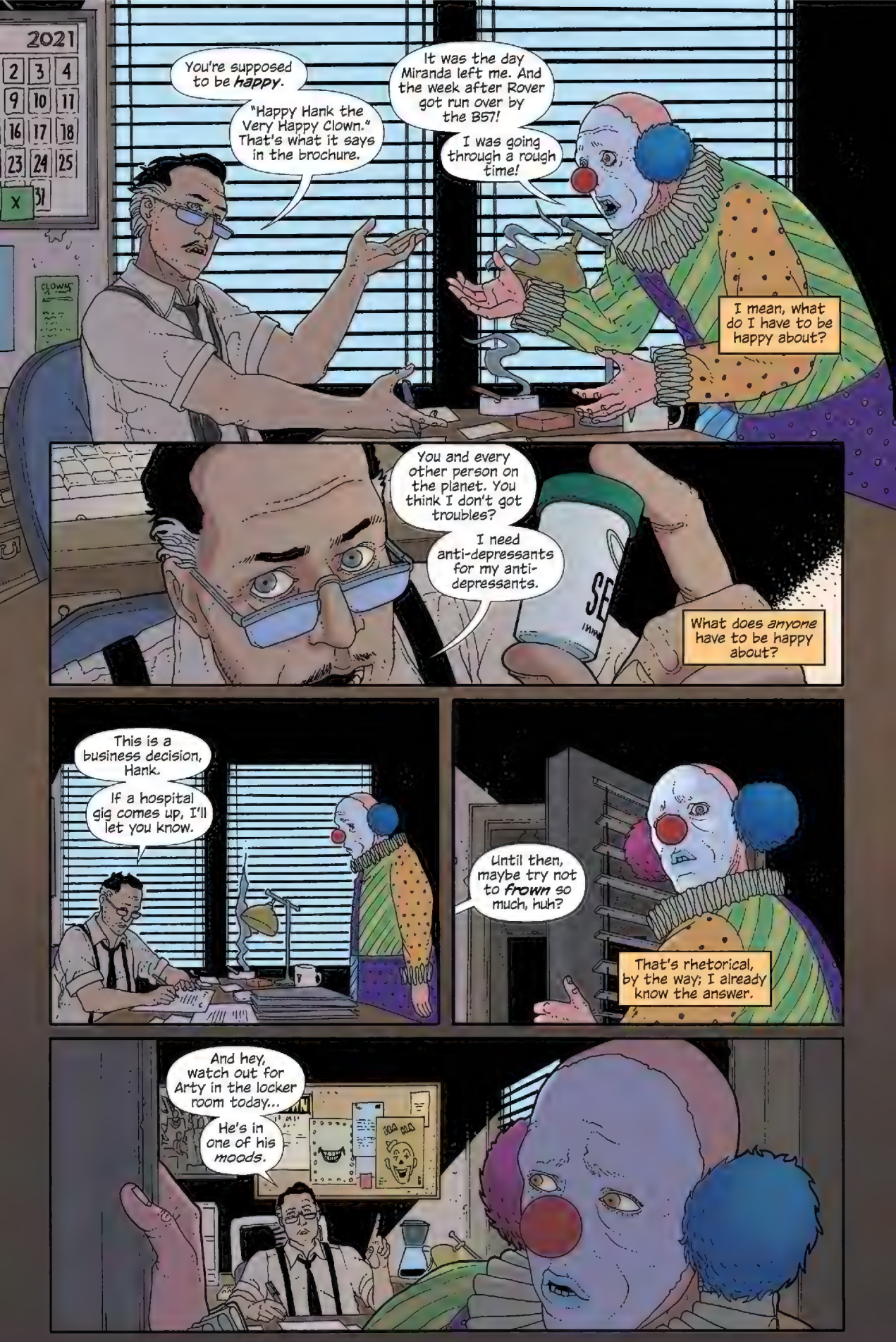
THE VERY HAPPY CLOWN

ART
MARTÍN MORAZZO

COLORS
CHRIS O'HALLORAN

Every little thing is fragmented—
Haha.
Atomized.
Like a bunch of *bugs*.
...but you knew that already, didn't you?
Here's what I know:

I'm the unluckiest schmuck in the whole world.
CLOWNS
RENTALS & PARTIES
You're killing me, Sam. I needed that gig!
I'm *serious*: **Happy Hank the Very Happy Clown** is the most crestfallen, sorry sunuvabitch you'll ever lay your stinkin' eyes on.
Sorry, Hank. But little Chrissy's birthday party went to Gustav.
Gustav?! With his dumb fucking balloons?
What kind of clown doesn't like balloons?
That guy's an *alcoholic*, Sam.
His breath could sterilize a scalpel!
And you're a teetotaler, is that right?
Listen to this review from your last party:
ICM
CLOWNS
"The clown seemed really sad. During his show, he'd frequently trail off mid-sentence and just kind of stare blankly at the kids. Later I think I heard him crying in the bathroom."
See?


2021
You're supposed to be happy.
"Happy Hank the Very Happy Clown." That's what it says in the brochure.
It was the day Miranda left me. And the week after Rover got run over by the BS7!
I was going through a rough time!
I mean, what do I have to be happy about?
You and every other person on the planet. You think I don't got troubles?
I need anti-depressants for my anti-depressants.
What does anyone have to be happy about?
This is a business decision, Hank.
If a hospital gig comes up, I'll let you know.
Until then, maybe try not to frown so much, huh?
That's rhetorical, by the way; I already know the answer.
And hey, watch out for Arty in the locker room today...
He's in one of his moods.

Anyone with two eyes and a half-working brain can see the *truth* plain as day:
Everything is **fucked.**
Sorry to hear about the party. Fucking Gustav, right?
Thanks, Dimples.
It's all a shell game, man. The whole system's rigged against little guys like us.
If you're looking to make some scratch, there's a trash heap down by the seaport paying for any *copper wire* you can find.
Is it just me, or is it getting **crazier** out there?
Pop quiz: what's the only sane response to a totally *insane* world?
Come on, *tell me.*

Arty, I don't wanna hear this shit right now, okay?
The answer's *insanity*, duh. Cuckoo karate, man!
I'm having a really bad fucking day!
They say that's all it takes.
And just because you don't want to hear something doesn't mean it isn't *true*.
Hank...
I want you to have this.
A *gun*, Arty? Why in God's name would I need a gun?
You never know when a bad day might turn, like...really, *really* bad.
Cuckoo karate! Check off the boxes, man.
HAHAHAHA
Like I said: everything and everyone is absolutely, irrevocably fucked.

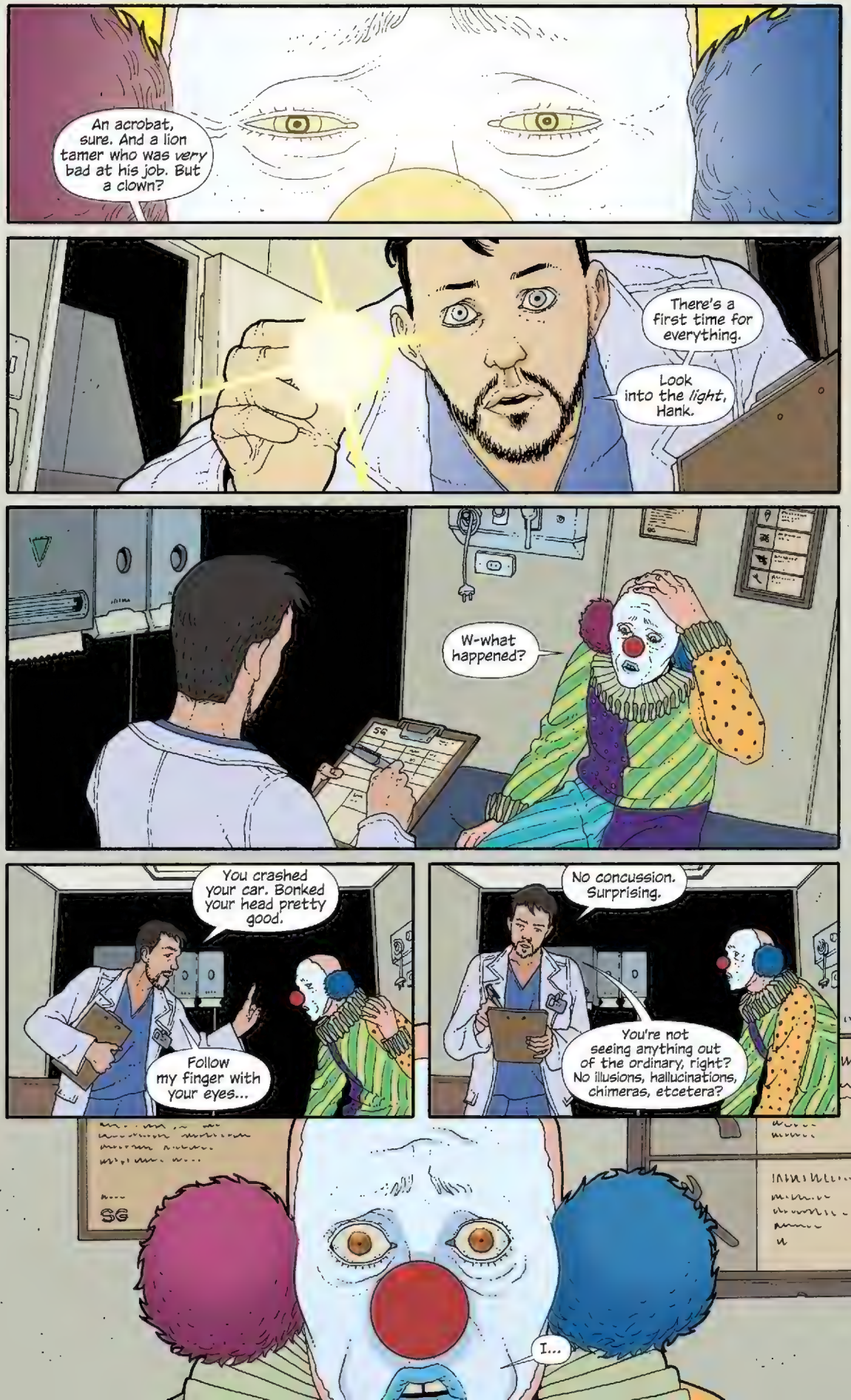
BAR
It's the same thing every morning, Jim.
BUD HICKEY
ROCK
I wake up with a...*humming* in my chest.
Like there's a goddamn parakeet flapping around my heart.
A parakeet. You don't say.
I'm not joking!
Electricity. Bird-energy.
I think they call that anxiety and depression, Hank. There's medicine for it.
I'm *on* Cymbalta. I take CBD in the morning...
I smoke weed and drink whiskey every single night. I *meditate*...

Nothing *works*. The humming never stops.
Sounds pretty bad.
Exactly.
One more for the road, please and thank you.
You sure you're okay to drive, Hank?
I'm not okay to do *anything*.
...s'never stopped me before.
Listen, it's not like I haven't tried to be a little ***sunnier***.
I've read self-help books; I'm in *three* different kinds of therapy.

But I've done the math over and over again.
They make keys so tiny now.
In the eternal struggle between all things good and all things crappy, the score is firmly in the favor of CRAP.
Vroom vroom.
It's not even close. I mean, just listen to this shit:
Cuckoo karate!
In the past two years alone, I've gotten divorced; my dog got hit by a bus!
...the bank foreclosed on my apartment and forced me into an even smaller apartment where the hot water lasts for about two minutes at a time...
Also: I'm a goddamn party clown who's ruined every party he's ever been to.
Rock in the evening! Rock it to the moon!

And that's just *me*. The rest of the world...
You read the news and it's just one terrible thing after another... people arguing, blaming each other, entrenching into opposite camps...
Fragmenting.
Can you really blame me for frowning?
Huh?
CE CREAM
CONES
Don't answer that-- it's rhetorical.
SHIT!
SCREECH!

CRASH!
Man, I'm feeling real tired all of a sudden.
I think I'm gonna nod off for a bit...
Fucking balloons...
Nighty night.
"I don't think I've ever had a clown in the ER before..."


An acrobat, sure. And a lion tamer who was *very* bad at his job. But a clown?
There's a first time for everything.
Look into the *light*, Hank.
W-what happened?
You crashed your car. Bonked your head pretty good.
Follow my finger with your eyes...
No concussion. Surprising.
You're not seeing anything out of the ordinary, right? No illusions, hallucinations, chimeras, etcetera?
I...

Nothing out of the ordinary, no.
Good. I've got about twenty *critical conditions* to tend to.
It's like someone flipped a goddamn *switch* out there.
The whole world's gone ***insane.***
Doc...
I wanted to talk to you about the ***parakeet*** in my chest.
Haha!
And who says clowns aren't funny?
Stay safe, Hank.
"Like someone flipped a switch..."

What the fuck happened while I was asleep?
Things *progressed*, Hank.
Who said that?
You said that. This is *your* voice.
I don't... I don't think that's right.
That doesn't *sound* like me.

EXIT
Henry Papadopolis for discharge.
Of course I sound like you. Watch:
"Everything and everyone is completely, irrevocably *fucked*. Life is shit, blah blah blah."
Do you... *see* that?
EXIT
Beg your pardon?
It's usually *my* voice I hear in my head.
But this is someone else's.
Did you say you were getting discharged, or admitted?
I think I need some air.

Air. That's a great idea, Hank.
I *know*. I just said so.
Here's another good one: you should shoot yourself in the head with Arty's gun.
I'm not gonna do that.
Every little thing is fragmented, Hank.
Atomized. Like a bunch of *bugs*.
But you already knew that, didn't you?
All I wanna do is take the bus back home and go to sleep.
Sure. If you say so.

SAVE JERRY! CALL 555-1234
B57 PRINCE ST.
Finally.
I can't take you very far...

I've got an injury to tend to.
...I think I'm gonna walk.
There are a million reasons to frown, Happy Hank.
A *billion* reasons to be sad.
It's all so **precarious**—dangling by the thinnest thread.
In the blink of an eye, it can be over...

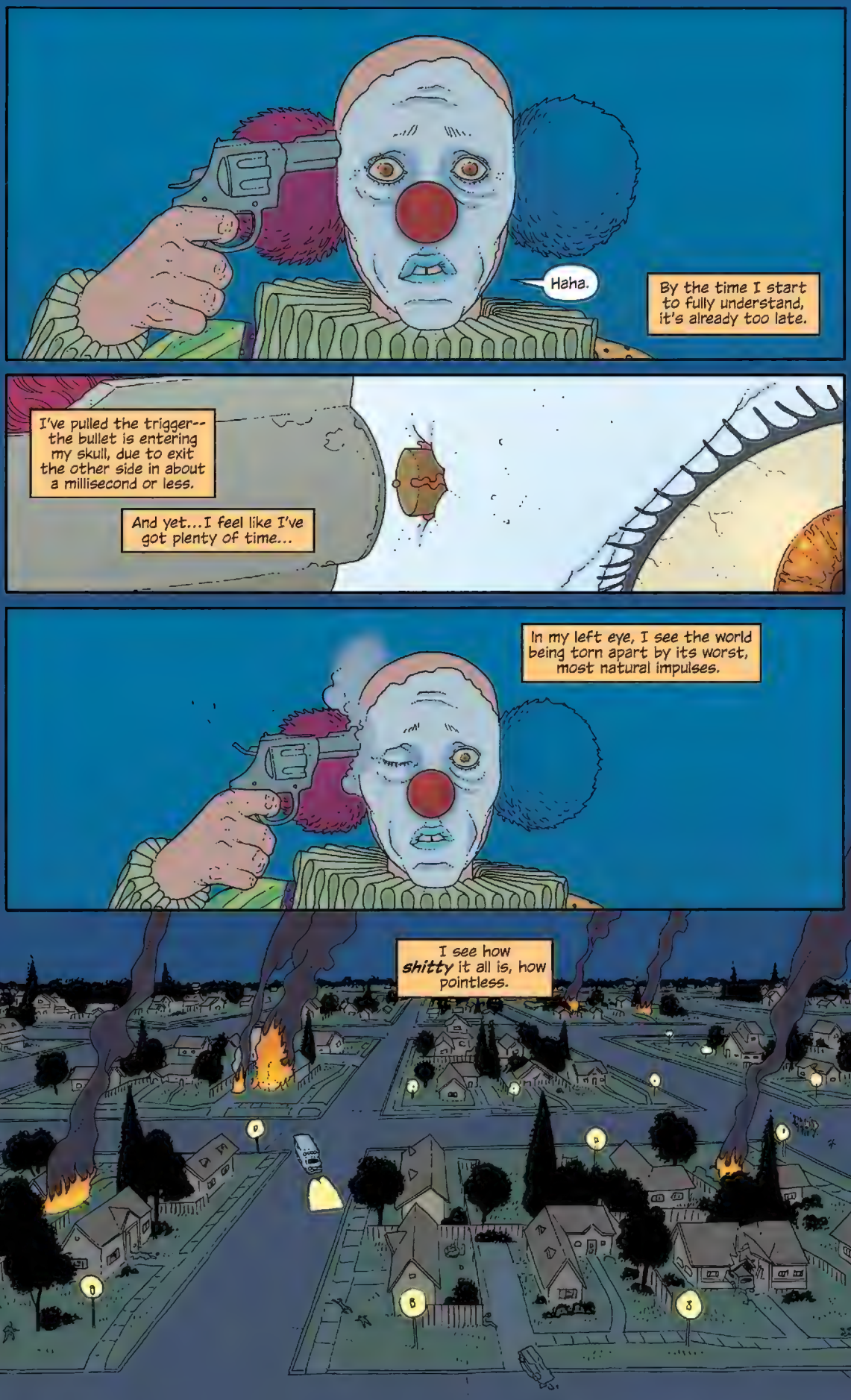
Lickety split —
just like that.

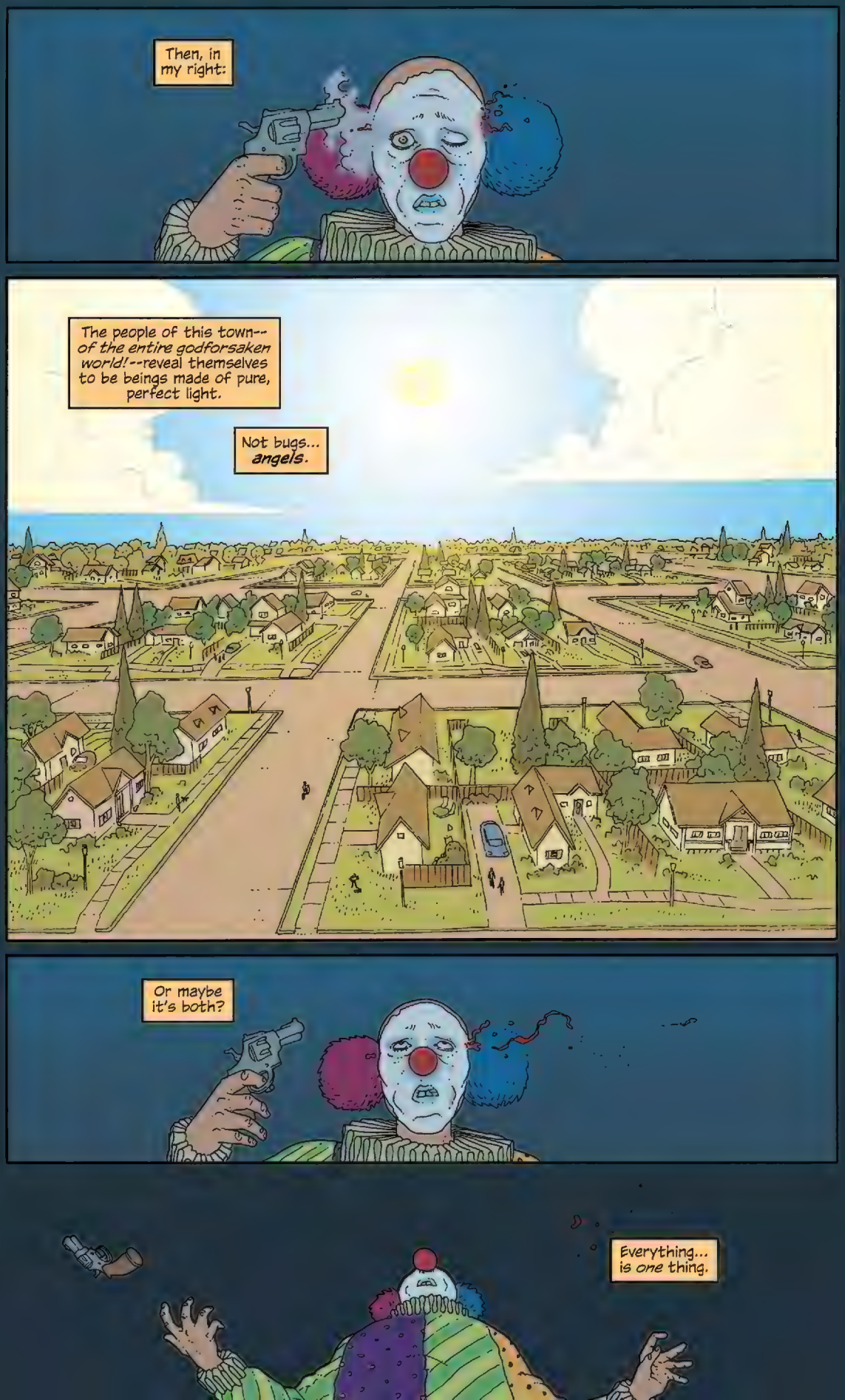
Maybe you're right.
I'm *you*, Hank. *You're* right.
What am I supposed to do?
I already told you.
There's only one sane response to an insane world...
Kill the terrible master...
Your *mind*.

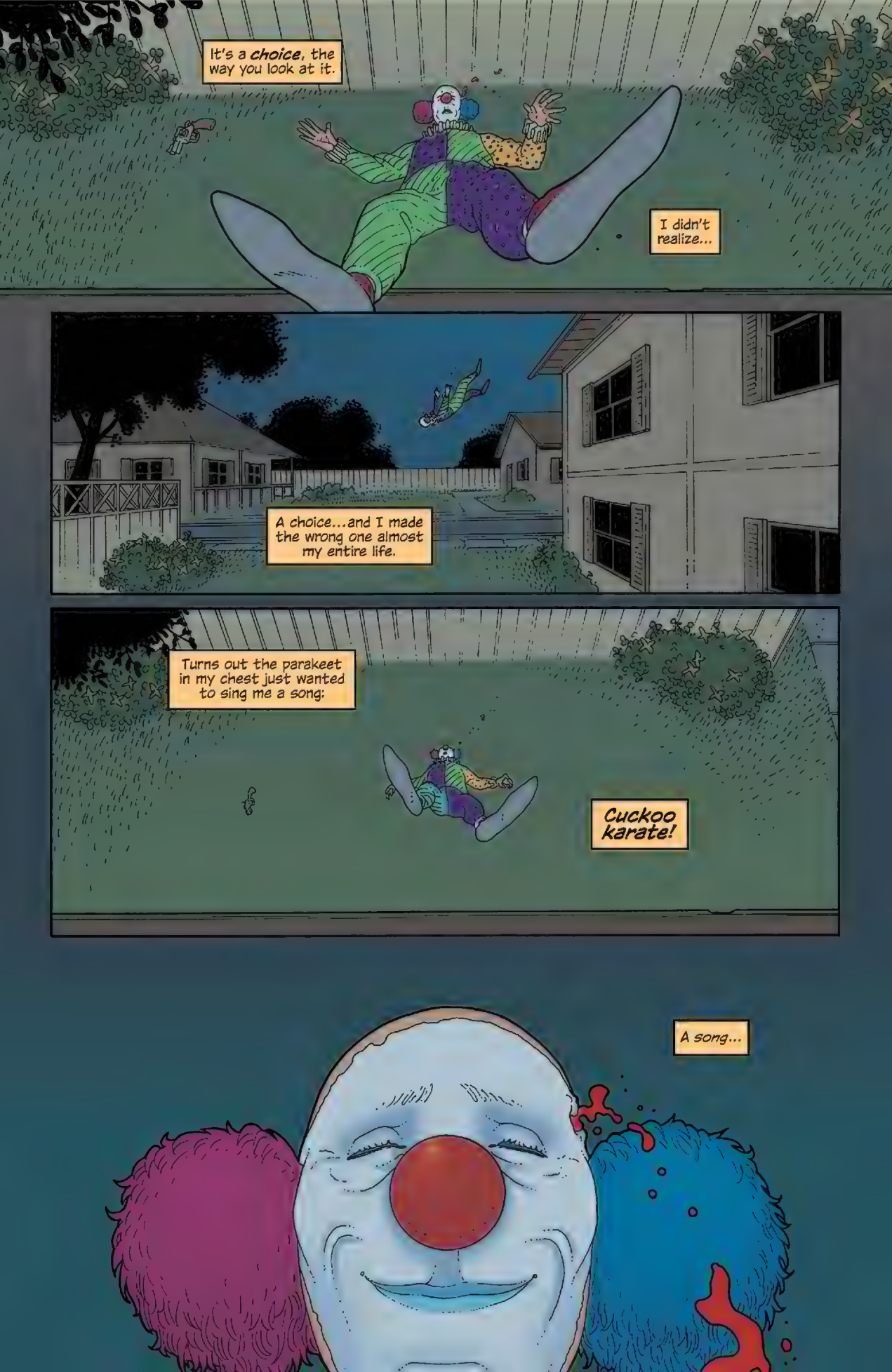
Up! Up! Rung by miserable rung...
Go take a look at it all from on high.
See the world the way God must see it.
See people for what they truly are.
Insects...
Little buggies, that's right.

What's he doing up there?
I dunno... he's holding something...
But I can't tell what it is.
It all seems so hopeless.
Why does it have to be this way?
Do it, Hank.
Hey mister, don't do it!

Lickety--
A parakeet?
A *parakeet*! Wait--
Oh, I see. How *funny*...


Haha.
By the time I start to fully understand, it's already too late.
I've pulled the trigger-- the bullet is entering my skull, due to exit the other side in about a millisecond or less.
And yet...I feel like I've got plenty of time...
In my left eye, I see the world being torn apart by its worst, most natural impulses.
I see how *shitty* it all is, how pointless.


Then, in my right:
The people of this town--of the entire godforsaken world!--reveal themselves to be beings made of pure, perfect light.
Not bugs... angels.
Or maybe it's both?
Everything... is one thing.


It's a choice, the way you look at it.
I didn't realize...
A choice...and I made the wrong one almost my entire life.
Turns out the parakeet in my chest just wanted to sing me a song:
Cuckoo karate!
A song...

Do you hear it?

Listen.

VARIANT COVER GALLERY

IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

NIMIT MALAVIA
MARTIN SIMMONDS
PAUL RENTLER
MIKE SHEA
SAM WOLFE CONNELLY
MARTÍN MORAZZO
BRIAN LEVEL

HAHA
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BUTTER

H is for Haha

DULL and DREARY Books for INSUFFERABLE Sadsacks

issue 6

A CIRCUS OF SORROW

by Prince and Morazzo and O'Halloran

LEVEL 21

MORE FUNNY BUSINESS

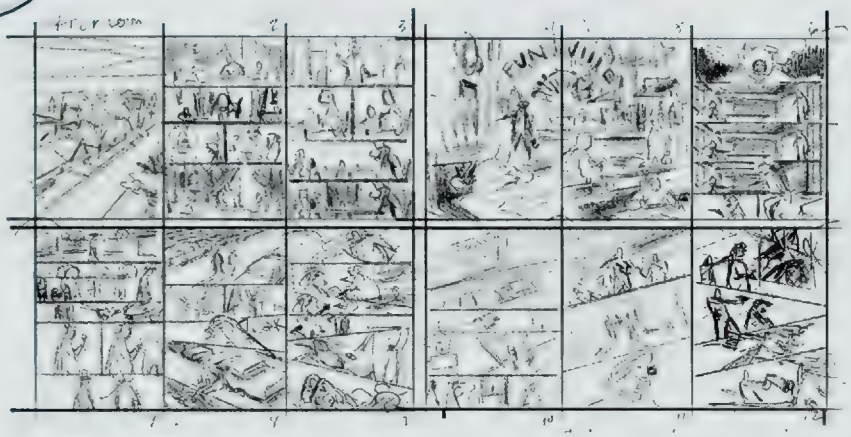
WHAT FOLLOWS ARE SKETCHES, LAYOUTS, AND THROWAWAY GAGS FROM THE MANY CONSUMMATE ARTISTS THAT MADE *HAHA* BEAUTIFUL. AIN'T LIFE FUNNY?

ZOE THOROGOOD

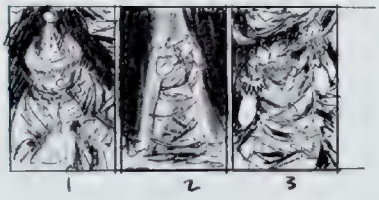
ISSUE 2
COVER THUMBNAILS

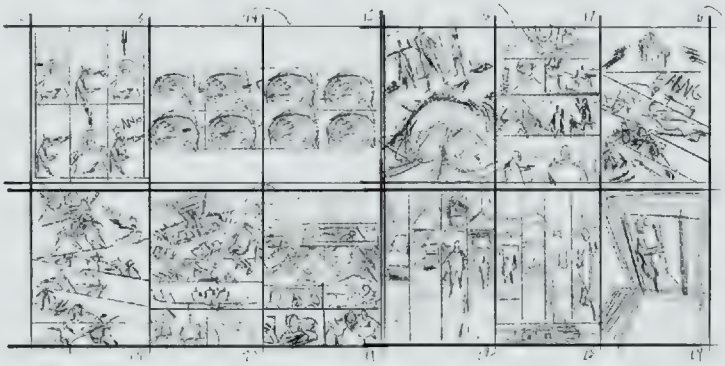
GABRIEL WALTA

VANESA DEL REY



ISSUE 1
THUMBNAILS





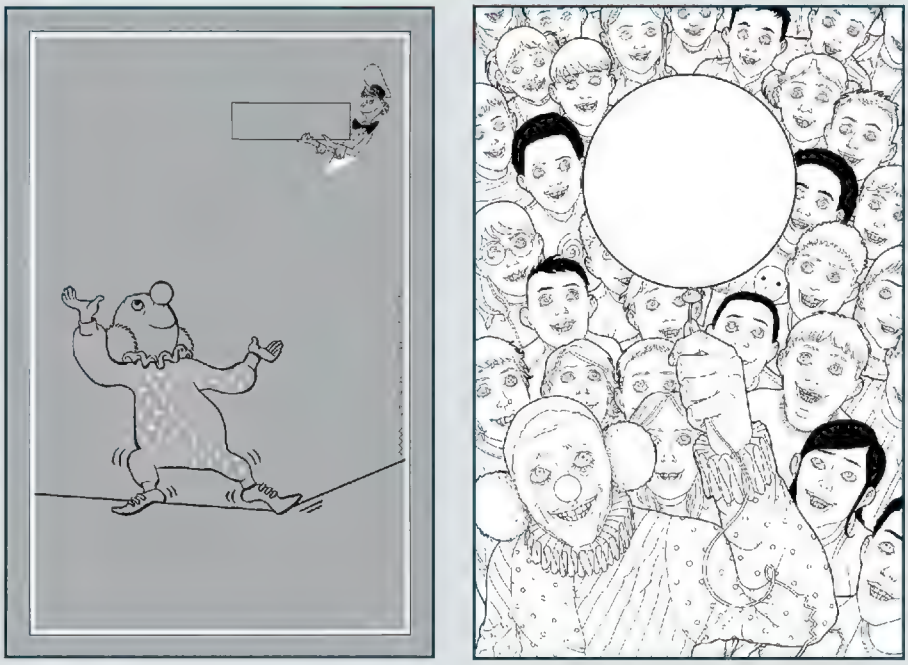
GUSTAV DESIGN OPTIONS

PATRICK HORVATH

ROGER LANGRIDGE

ISSUE 3
COVER THUMBNAILS

ISSUE 6
COVER THUMBNAILS



MARTÍN MORAZZO

WELCOME TO THE SHOW, LADIES AND GERMS...

ONE OF THE MOST ORIGINAL VOICES IN MODERN COMICS, **W. MAXWELL PRINCE** (*ICE CREAM MAN*) BRINGS HIS SIGNATURE STYLE OF ONE-SHOT STORYTELLING TO THE WORLD OF CLOWNS—AND HE'S INVITED **SOME OF THE INDUSTRY'S BEST ARTISTS** TO JOIN HIM FOR THE RIDE.

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"WOW, YOU WEREN'T KIDDING—THESE CLOWN COMICS ARE REALLY SAD."
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